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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(2004-2005)**

FOURTEENTH LOK SABHA

**MINISTRY OF INFORMATION
AND BROADCASTING**

**FUNCTIONING OF REGISTRAR OF
NEWSPAPERS FOR INDIA (RNI)**

NINETEENTH REPORT



मयमेव जयन्

**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

May, 2005/Vaisakha, 1927 (Saka)

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FUNCTIONING OF REGISTRAR OF
NEWSPAPERS FOR INDIA (RNI)

Presented to Lok Sabha on

Laid in Rajya Sabha on



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

May, 2005/Vaisakha, 1927 (Saka)

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COMPOSITION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (2004-2005)

Shri M.M. Pallam Raju—*Chairman*

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24. Dr. Akhilesh Das
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*Nominated *w.e.f.* 20.8.2004.

(iv)

26. Shri Dara Singh
27. Smt. Sarla Maheshwari
28. Shri N.R. Govindraj
29. Shri K. Rama Mohana Rao
30. Shri Motiur Rahman
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SECRETARIAT

- | | | |
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| 6. Smt. Geeta Parmar | — | <i>Executive Officer</i> |

*Nominated *w.e.f.* 24.3.2005.

INTRODUCTION

1. I, the Chairman Standing Committee on Information Technology (2004-05) having been authorised by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, present this Nineteenth Report on "Functioning of Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI)" relating to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

2. The Committee took oral evidence of the representatives of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI) on 23 November, 2003 and 14 December, 2004. The Committee also took evidence of the representatives of the Indian Newspapers Society (INS), All India Small & Medium Newspapers Federation (AISMNF) and All India Newspapers Editors' Conference (AINEC) on 14.12.2004.

3. In this Report, the Committee have emphasised on the need to amend Press and Registration of Books (PRB) Act, 1867. The Act describes the duties and functions of RNI.

4. The Report was considered and adopted by the Committee at their sitting held on 9.3.2005.

5. The Committee wish to express their thanks to the representatives of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI), the Indian Newspapers Society (INS), All India Small & Medium Newspapers Federation (AISMNF) and All India Newspapers Editors' Conference (AINEC) for appearing before the Committee and for furnishing information that the Committee desired in connection with the examination of the Subject.

6. For facility of reference and convenience, the observations and recommendations of the Committee have been printed in bold letters in Part-II of the Report.

NEW DELHI;
31 *March*, 2005
10 *Chaitra*, 1927 (*Saka*)

M.M. PALLAM RAJU,
Chairman,
Standing Committee on
Information Technology.

REPORT

PART-I

INTRODUCTORY

The Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI) came into being on 1st July, 1956 on the recommendation of the first Press Commission in 1953 and by amending the Press and Registration of Books (PRB) Act, 1867. The PRB Act is an Act for regulation of Printing presses and Newspapers, for preservation of copies of books and newspapers printed in India, and for the registration of such books. It contains the duties and functions of the 'Press Registrar' *i.e.*, the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI).

2. The Office of RNI has been performing Statutory as well as Non-Statutory functions. The statutory functions performed by RNI are processing of applications for title verification that come through District Magistrates (DMs); informing the DMs about the availability of titles, for intending publishers for filing declaration; issue of Certificate of Registration to the newspapers published under valid declaration; compilation and maintenance of a Register of Newspapers containing particulars about all the newspapers published in the country; scrutiny, analysis and compilation of Annual Statements sent by the publishers of newspapers every year under Section 19-D of the PRB Act, containing information on circulation, ownership, etc. and submission of the Report "Press in India" to the Government on 31st December every year and verification under Section 19-F of the PRB Act, of circulation claims furnished by the publishers in their Annual Statements.

3. The non-statutory functions entrusted upon RNI are to issue Eligibility Certificates to the newspapers to enable them to import newsprint; Essentiality Certificate to import printing and allied machinery and materials and 'No Newspaper Certificates' to the publications which are not newspapers/newsmagazines.

Organisational Set up

4. Pursuant to various functions assigned to Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI), the Committee enquired about the

organisational set up of RNI. In response, the witness informed the Committee during evidence that the Press Registrar is the Head of the RNI. The Deputy Press Registrar and four Assistant Press Registrars are under him. One sits at the Headquarters and the other three at each of the three Regional Offices located in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata. There is also a Senior Circulation Officer and also Circulation officers who are posted at the headquarters as well as in the Regional Offices.

5. When asked whether some changes were made in the organisational set up of RNI since 1956 when it was first set up and whether those changes were adequate to effectively run the functioning of RNI. The Committee have been informed that the organisational set up of RNI was changed during the year 1978 when three Regional Offices were established, one each at Chennai, Mumbai and Kolkata. These three regional offices headed by Circulation Officers were strengthened in 1990 by creating Group 'A' IIS posts of Assistant Press Registrar along with other subordinate staff. It was added that the strengthening of infrastructure in RNI envisaged under the Tenth Plan would meet the requirements of the Department adequately.

6. The Committee enquired about the difficulties being faced by RNI in opening of regional offices in more locations. In reply, the witness stated that such a proposal was made earlier but it was pruned down for administrative reasons. However, the matter could be taken up again.

Plan Outlay

7. The Committee have observed that there was no Plan Scheme of RNI during 9th Plan, however an outlay of Rs. 92.00 lakhs have been approved for the 10th Plan Scheme "Modernisation of RNI". The scheme comprises of two components viz. Computerisation of RNI with an outlay of Rs. 40 lakhs and Renovation of RNI Headquarters with an outlay of Rs. 52 lakhs. Computerisation Programme is stated to be aimed for computerisation of title verification, registration and data storage of circulation figures etc. R.F. Link installation and air-conditioning of selected portions in the office. When asked about the Non-Plan and Plan allocation and actual expenditure by RNI during

the last three years, the Ministry have furnished the following figures:—

Non-Plan		(Rupees in Lakhs)		
Sl.No.	Year	S.B.G.	Actual expenditure	Reasons for variations
1.	2001-02	198.63	196.03	Minor savings have occurred due to receipt of lesser than expected bills for medical reimbursement to staff.
2.	2002-03	212.10	199.22	Minor savings have occurred due to receipt of lesser than expected bills for medical reimbursement to staff.
3.	2003-04	227.80	213.68	Provision for payment of dues in accordance with a CAT/Court award was included in the S.B.G. allocation but the payment did not materialize and accordingly R.E. was kept at Rs. 215.60 lakhs.
Plan				
1.	2001-02	Nil	Nil	There was no Plan Scheme of RNI during 9th Plan.
2.	2002-03	60.00	Nil	No expenditure was incurred since the Scheme was not approved.
3.	2003-04	132.00	36.73	The scope of the scheme was redefined and the S.B.G. of Rs. 132.00 lakhs was reduced to Rs. 41.50 lakhs at the final grant stage. The savings occurred as CPWD could not accomplish the sanctioned works during the financial year due to time constraints.

As regards the allocation for the year 2004-2005, the Ministry forwarded the following figures:-

(In Lakhs)			
Year	Plan	Non-Plan	Total
2004-05	Rs. 29.50	Rs. 226.00	Rs. 255.50

8. The Committee observed that Rs. 60 lakh were provided under the Plan Sanctioned Budget grant for the year 2002-03 for its proposed scheme, however the same could not be incurred at all as the scheme was not approved. Further, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting stated in a written reply that out of higher budget allocations of Rs. 132 lakh proposed under the Plan head, only Rs. 36.73 lakh could be utilised during the year 2003-04. It was further clarified that the Plan outlay for the year was approved by the competent authority to the extent of Rs. 42.50 lakh at RE stage. The saving occurred as CPWD could not accomplish the sanctioned works during the financial year due to time constraint.

9. The Committee also noted that out of Rs. 37 lakhs (approx.) utilized, Rs. 15 lakhs (approx.) were spent on computerisation and a sum of Rs. 22.00 lakhs (approx.) on renovation of RNI Headquarters, civil works on walls, floors, doors, windows etc. and replacement of electrical wirings/fittings etc). The sanctioned budget grant for the year 2004-05, is Rs. 29.5 lakhs.

Staff Constraints

10. The Ministry have informed that the sanctioned strength of RNI is 138 including that of regional offices. The existing strength is 120. The break-up of the sanctioned and existing staff strength of RNI is as under:

Designation	Sanctioned	In position	Vacant
Group A	7	7	—
Group B (Gazetted)	14	12	2
Group B (Non-Gazetted)	19	17	8
Group C	69	63	7
Group D	22	21	1
Total	131	120	11

11. In reply to a query, the Ministry clarified during evidence that they had a vacancy position that was not so bad. It was only 13% and efforts were being made to fill up these vacancies. However, in a written reply, Ministry/RNI have stated that the matter for revival of the two posts of Circulation Officer was taken up with the Ministry of Finance, Department of Expenditure. Ministry of Finance had earlier agreed for revival of one post of Circulation Officer at Kolkata Regional Office subject to abolition of the other post at RNI (Headquarters), which, however, was not acceptable to the RNI/Ministry of I&B. Therefore, the Ministry of Finance has again been requested to agree to allow Ministry of I & B to fill the post of Circulation Officer at Hqrs. accepting the post of Circulation Officer at Kolkata as matching saving. The matter is stated to be under consideration for revival of both the posts. Further, the vacancies in the category of Registration Assistants come under the Indian Information Service cadre and are to be filled up by transfer.

12. In this context, the witness during evidence stated:

“...We are trying to face the constraint. We face it by taking additional staff within the Government, within the RNI. We can also take people on job work. For example, in regard to technical staff, we can take them to join as a team. For example, there are Chartered Accountants. They can join the team for assessment of the financial position or printing experts can be taken from outside. They would work under the Government Officers. They go as members of the team. The team will be led by a Government officer...”.

13. The witness further added that they had been trying to deal with the staff constraint in four ways which were simplification of procedure, computerization, outsourcing and wherever required by additional staff.

STATUTORY FUNCTIONS

Verification of Titles

14. As regards the procedure for verification of titles, the RNI have stated that requests for titles are received through District Magistrates from all over the country. The number of titles proposed in an application varies from 1 to 20, sometimes even more. More the

number of proposed titles, longer the processing time. The processing of availability of titles has been computerised. The titles proposed are fed into the computer so as to check with the existing same and similar titles in the computer. After the check, new titles are approved whereas same or similar titles are refused. Intimation of acceptance/rejection is sent to the applicant as well as to the Magistrate forwarding the application. The District Magistrates also intimates the applicant in case the title is available. He authenticates the declaration. All existing registered newspapers' titles are put on RNI's website. This facilitates the potential publisher to avoid proposing an existing title.

15. During evidence, the Committee drew the attention of the representatives of Ministry of I&B/RNI to one of the problems highlighted by the representatives of Newspaper Federations relating to the procedure for verification of titles adopted by RNI. They had stated that it was cumbersome and it took a long time to get a title cleared by the RNI. They have to wait for months together to know the status of their applications. Many a times even after months of applying for titles verification, RNI informs that the title applied for, has already been allotted. In that case they have to apply afresh with a new title. The Committee also pointed out that the District Magistrates were already overburdened with too much of work. It would not be proper to depend so much on them.

16. Clarifying the point, the witness has stated that as per the Act, the District Magistrate has to once verify the title and once authenticate it. However, they admitted that though the DM has once to do the title verification and once the authentication as per the PRB Act, the provision needs to be eased. In this context, to a suggestion made by the Committee that the details could be submitted directly to RNI instead of to the DM, the witness submitted:

“once the procedure becomes online, it will be streamlined. We take note of that. Since we are thinking of amending the Act, we need to modify the provisions. Once the system is reworked, we can have another look at it. ...”

17. On being asked to state the future plan of RNI to make the procedure of title verification on-line, the Ministry of I&B informed that on-line verification of titles/registration etc. was technically feasible. NIC had developed software for on-line registration/verification of newspapers in consultation with RNI. This could be put in operation

within next two years once the specific details were worked out with stake holders, implementing agencies such as, District Magistrates etc. It would be considered for implementation on a pilot basis and in a phased manner. It was also stated that Amendment to the PRB Act too might be necessary.

18. As regards time taken by RNI to clear a title, the witness stated that the titles were being cleared within two or three weeks. Looking at the cumbersome procedure adopted by RNI for title verification, the Committee apprehended whether the whole process could be completed in two weeks time. Responding to it, the witness stated that for quite some time there had been mechanical functioning of the RNI office due to which a number of titles were getting blocked.

19. The Committee further enquired about the number of applications received, approved, refused and discrepancy letters sent to the applicant during the last three years. In reply, the details given by the Ministry are as under:

Year	Application Received	Titles approved	Applications Refused	Discrepancy Letters sent	No action Called for	Pendency
2002	19,852	12,648	5929	865	410	—
2003	21,504	12,978	5,234	1,624	1,668	—
2004 (upto Nov.)	18,123	11,493	4,393	304	71*	1,862

*This include duplicate application or application received without the authentication of DM and other such letters which do not call any action.

Refusal of Titles

20. The reasons for refusal of the titles as stated by the Ministry are (i) requested titles were same or similar to that of any other newspapers published in the same language or in the same State; (ii) the titles were the same as any published foreign title and (iii) the application for title verification was incomplete. On being asked as to why foreign titles were being rejected, the witness during evidence stated that this was done as per the Act and also according to a Cabinet decision taken in 1955, which stated that any Indian edition of a foreign paper was not allowed. When the Committee pointed out

that perhaps this was being done as this issue was close to Patents and Trademarks, which needed to be honoured, the witness reacted as follows:

“What the Hon. Chairman has mentioned is the key to the whole issue. If there is a copyright of a particular item, it is not merely the name, but also the Mast head, Logo and many other things. If they are not the same, perhaps it can be done on a detailed search. We have started doing it based on the decision of the Cabinet. But it is subject to certainly a review. We are taking it back to the Cabinet also for a decision on this issue. It has been pointed out that if somebody is having a ‘Dawn’ in Andhra Pradesh, how is it relevant if there is another ‘Dawn’ in some other country. We are reviewing this issue.”

De-blocking of titles

21. The Committee have been informed that the titles verified but not registered are being de-blocked after two years. The first exercise to de-block unregistered titles was undertaken in 1998, when about 1.7 lakhs titles were de-blocked. De-blocking of unregistered titles thereafter has been internalized. About, 8155 unregistered titles verified in the year 2000, were de-blocked during 2002-2003, and about 7440 titles verified in the year 2001 were de-blocked during 2003-2004. To a specific query as to non de-blocking of the unregistered titles earlier, the Ministry of I&B/RNI clarified that earlier there was no computerisation and the processes were also very lengthy.

Registration of Newspapers

22. To a query regarding registration of titles and its validity, the Ministry/RNI have stated that after a title is verified the publisher has to file a Declaration before the District Magistrate for seeking registration. After the Declaration is authenticated, the publisher is required to bring out the first issue within 42 days, in the case of a daily or weekly and within 90 days for publications with a periodicity of more than a week. The Declaration becomes void, if the publisher fails to bring out the first issue within the stipulated time. After bringing out the first issue in time, the publisher is required to submit a copy of a Declaration, copy of the first issue of the newspaper/periodical with correct imprint line and ‘no-foreign tie-up’ affidavit, and the latest issue of the newspaper for registration. On receipt of

these documents the case is processed and registration number is given, entered into the register and also in the computer, and a Certificate of Registration is issued.

Issue of Registration Certificates

23. When Committee enquired about the number of Registration Certificates issued by RNI during the last three years, the Ministry during evidence informed that 3954, 5117 and 5341 registration certificates had been issued during 2001, Jan. 2002 to March 2003 and April 2003 to November 2004 respectively. The witness further added that only 1986 registration certificates were issued in the year 1996 and therefore the work load as on date has gone up three times.

24. The Committee have been informed that RNI has on record 58,467 registered publications including newspapers, weeklies etc. as on November, 2004, but most of those are defunct and RNI does not have the exact details. Though a large number of the registered publications might have ceased to exist, those are still included in the register of publications.

Revised Certificate of Registration

25. It has been informed that though the registration is done only once, a Revised Certificate of Registration is required whenever there is change of title/owner/printer/publisher/periodicity/language/place of printing/publication etc. A fresh Declaration indicating the reason for the same has to be filed and got authenticated by the DM again. The publisher is required to return the original registration certificate. In case the original certificate of registration is lost/damaged or misplaced, an affidavit for loss of the same along with an Indian Postal Order for Rs. 5.00 is to be sent by the publisher.

26. The Ministry has provided the following figures regarding issue of Revised Certificate of Registration.

Year	No. of requests received for RCR	RCR issued
2002	875	661
2003	925	531
2004 (upto November 30)	1,075	305
Total	2,875	1,497

According to the Ministry, the pendency was normally due to delay/non-compliance/incomplete submission of documents on the part of publisher and not publishing in conformity with the rules laid in this regard *i.e.* invalid/void declaration, pre-publications, time barred cases, it also involved disputed ownership.

In this connection, the Department also clarified that no request for revised registration was rejected.

Annual Statements

27. The Committee have been informed that under the PRB Act, every year the publishers are required to submit an Annual statement containing details of publication, circulation, ownership, editors, price etc. whenever their average circulation exceeds 2000 copies. The Annual Statements should carry the signatures of the publisher and also bear the certificate of Chartered Accountant with his signature and office seal. These statements are received directly or indirectly in RNI headquarters, however there remains a huge gap between the total registered publications and the annual statements furnished. Out of the total 58,467 registered publications, annual statements have been received in respect of only 5500 publications.

28. The details regarding number of annual statements due and received during the last three years are given as under:

Sl.No.	Year	Number of registered Newspapers	Number of Annual Statements received
1.	2001	51960	5055
2.	2002-03	55780	7156
3.	2003-04	58469	5591

29. Expressing their concern over the receipt of very few Annual statements as compared to the total number of publications registered, the Committee desired to know the steps taken by RNI to increase the awareness among the publishers to submit regularly their Annual Statements. In response, the Ministry/RNI has stated that RNI made special initiatives to improve compliance by publishers like advertisements were placed in various media and a network was also provided for receiving centers for annual statements at various

regional/branch and field officers of RNI, PIB, DFP and DAVP. As a result, 7156 Annual Statements were received in the year 2002-03, which was the maximum so far.

30. The Director, DAVP during evidence was candid enough to admit that with the non-submission of annual Statements, "Press in India" was not reflected correctly. The details were not correctly known. They were not able to reflect the growth of the industry. The errors in the RNI database were therefore multiplying which also led to title rejection because the titles were not being used and they denied them to the real new entrants who wanted to publish their publications. This also slowed down the software because as on date they had 1.06 lakhs titles. Some 100 to 125 titles were processed daily and some 70 to 80 were being cleared. They have been checking them against 1.06 lakh figure in State-wise and language-wise list. The whole thing was churning quite unnecessarily because the titles were really not being properly utilised.

31. The Committee pointed out that the figure of 2000 copies of publication for submitting the Annual Statement was quite low in the present time and needed to be revised substantially as it would lead to substantial decline in the requirement of submission of annual statements. In reply, the Ministry of I&B stated that as per PRB Act, it was the duty of the publisher of every publication to furnish annual statement every year. There was no circulation limit for submitting the annual statement except that a Chartered Accountant should certify such statements when the average circulation exceeded 2000 copies and if it was below 2000 copies the publisher himself could certify the same. The submission of Annual Statements was mandatory for all newspapers. It was admitted that the upward revision would not doubt reduce the burden of RNI but this would at the same time also affect the empanelment of small newspapers in DAVP for release of advertisements as there was a criteria for minimum circulation of 2000 copies to be certified by a Chartered Accountant.

32. In reply to a similar query, the witness stated that the upward revision of the benchmark for self certification from 2000 copies to 5000 copies was quite feasible. Limit should be raised to make self-certification upto 5000 permissible. But the limit of 2000 copies was common for RNI and DAVP and if RNI raised the limit to 5000, DAVP would have problems because self-certification beyond 2,000 could be spurious as they gave out advertisements etc. and if benchmark went

up, a large number of publications might go to them with fake circulation figures to try and take advantage of this situation.

Imposition of penalty

33. In this context, the Committee desired to know whether the submission of Annual Statements was mandatory. To this, the witness replied in the affirmative. When asked about the penalty being imposed in case of non-submission of the Annual Statement, the Committee were informed that the PRB Act provided for a fine of Rs. 500 only for defaulters. But even if the fine was increased to Rs. 5,000, it would only raise the harassment level and would not serve any purpose. As regards disqualifying the publisher in such cases, Ministry have stated that they have not taken any action in this regard so far as this could lead to harassment. Sometimes some small newspapers give excuses for not submitting annual statement in time. If such newspapers are disqualified, they will have to go through the whole process of registration. On the other hand if the publication is de-registered in case it has failed to submit annual statements for three years or so, then it may have some impact. Once the procedure of registration will be on-line, the publisher can go to any cyber-cafe and fill up one page format even locally and if they are into printing, it should not be difficult for them. In that case, violation of that requirement may lead to punitive action which is more like de-registration. The imposition of penalty of Rs. 500 and its collection would lead to spending much more than the collection of Rs. 500 itself."

34. To a specific query, the Committee have been informed that in the present form of Press & Registration of Books Act, 1867, there was no provision for deletion of names of ceased publications. However, it was being examined whether the publications which had not filed even a single Annual statement during the last 6 years could be de-registered presuming that they were not being published, after giving a general notice. Further, the Committee have been informed that since all this would require suitable amendment in the PRB Act, 1867, it would be looked into to amend the Act to incorporate provisions, *inter-alia*, to de-register publications to cancel the registration number, and, to cease the title for re-use.

Papers published without registration

35. On being enquired about the action taken against newspapers published without getting themselves registered, the Ministry have

stated that complaints of newspaper being published without RNI clearance are examined according to the Act, and if it is found that violation of Act is involved, the concerned DMs are requested to take appropriate action. The PRB Act, 1867 provides for a fine not exceeding Rs. 2,000/- or imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or both if a newspaper is being published without conforming to the rules. There is no mechanism available in RNI for detecting or identifying the cases or publication of newspapers without RNI clearance as per PRB Act, 1867. They further stated that it was not considered necessary to maintain a data of such complaints, as the concerned DMs were the competent authority for necessary action in such cases.

Circulation verification

36. Verification of circulation claim of newspapers/periodicals, though not expressly provided for in the Act, is derived from Section 19(F) of the PRB Act, 1867(25 of 1867), which provides right of access to records and documents relating to newspaper to Press Registrar or any Gazetted Officer authorised by him in writing. The Ministry have stated that in order to check exaggerated claims of circulation by publishers, the RNI evolved an internal method of circulation verification taken up on its own or referred by DAVP/PIB/State Govt. Circulation checks are also undertaken at the instance of Central/State Government Departments/organisations on the basis of complaints, at the request of publications whose circulation claims have been declared unestablished etc. and those cases referred to by PIB, Press Council of India and Secretariats of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

37. When asked about the number of cases referred to RNI by DAVP/PIB/State Governments during the last three years, the Committee were informed that during 2000, 2001 and 2002-03, as many as 2628 cases out of the total of 2658 cases were referred by DAVP, 5 cases were referred by State Governments, one case by PIB and the remaining 24 complaints were received directly.

38. During evidence, the witness further added that the total number of cases for circulation checks which were required to be taken up now, were 937, out of which 359 cases were cleared upto November, 2004 but there was a backlog of 578. Then 500 cases on DAVP panel not verified for over three years were also to be taken up. So there were 1078 cases pending as on date.

39. To a query regarding circulation verification, the Committee have been informed that input circulation check was done through details of printing machinery and consumption of newsprint and an output check through distribution of sold copies to agents, hawkers etc. and through sale proceeds of the publication. According to the Ministry, the Circulation helps in fixing the advertisement rates. The Details of Circulation claims assessed/verified by the RNI are given as under:

Year	2000	2001	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
Fully assessed	264	301	289	168	76
Lower assessed	420	807	753	365	226
Unestablished	904	571	262	255	57
Total	1588	1679	1304	788	359

40. When asked about the reasons for less number of circulation check during 2003-04 and 2004-05 as compared to previous years, the witness stated that RNI would be able to reach a target of 700 plus circulation checks before the end of the financial year but this number was less than year 2002-03 and 2003-04 when 1304 and 788 circulation checks were done. The reason being the spot checks which had gone up, which meant a team of three people visit the premises. Time taken in one time spot check was equal to time taken in six document based checks. Spot checks had also increased from 25 to 150 annually. Besides there were vacancies of two Circulation officers and 2 Account clerks.

41. Reacting to a query as to whether circulation checks should be carried out periodically/more frequently, the Committee were informed that on an average one thousand cases of verification of circulation were undertaken by RNI in a year. It included spot check cases which were finalized after visiting the printing press and scrutinizing the documents of the publisher at this office/press. This exercise was arduous in nature and time consuming. Of late the spot checks exercise had increased considerably as DAVP specifically requested for conducting spot checks. The existing quantum of work was too voluminous *vis-a-vis* manpower available. The workload had increased three-fold but the sanctioned strength remained the same. Effective circulation check pre-supposes adequate trained manpower to ensure check to be carried out at least once a year. Although RNI was

empowered to inspect the record of all newspapers, the circulation check might continue to be confined to DAVP empanelled newspapers. The suggested measures were given as computerisation and automation in RNI activities. It was added that the new software was already launched. Redeployment of staff from other wings within RNI to the Circulation Wing would take place soon once the software was operationalised. They would also be associated with PIB officers and technical experts from outside.

42. Various newspapers bodies tendered evidence before the Committee on "Functioning of RNI". It was pointed out that small and medium newspapers were facing difficulty in getting circulation verification by RNI on time. This affected directly their rates with the DAVP at the time of re-establishment of circulation after three years. DAVP insisted on reducing the rates, to the minimum rates, unless the circulation was authenticated by the RNI. Due to in-sufficient staff RNI was not able to do the circulation checks in time. According to them, it was not done in three years, the rates would be automatically reduced. Now according to the new procedure they have to apply through DAVP. They wanted that DAVP should continue to pay the already approved rates given to the newspapers till the RNI issues a final certificate about the circulation figure.

43. It was further pointed out that the process of circulation verification adopted by RNI particularly for small and medium newspapers was tedious and out-dated. For instance one of the documents required was the bill that the publisher gave to the hawker every day. Suppose a newspaper had got around 180 hawkers in Delhi then for 365 days they would have to give two copies of 180 bills, They desired that the rules for circulation checks should be simple and straightforward. The time limit should be prescribed within which RNI should issue the circulation certificate. In the case of large newspapers, RNI did not verify, if they were members of ABC.

Fee for title clearance or registration

44. The Committee enquired whether RNI had been charging some processing fee for registration of the title. In reply, the Committee were informed that RNI performed both statutory and non-statutory functions such as title verification, registration, bringing out 'Press in India', circulation check, issue of eligibility certificate for import of newsprint, essentiality certificate for import of printing machinery etc.

without charging user fee from the clients. Further, the Committee were informed during evidence by the representative of RNI that the Expenditure Reforms Commission had made a recommendation for imposing some service charges for various services which were being given by RNI.

The witness added:

“The Office of the RNI has to discharge statutory functions; it has to be continued for securing the orderly development of newspapers journalism as well as book industry.

The revenue earned by the RNI annually is about Rs. 60,000 (the earnings last year, 1999-2000 was Rs. 58,000). A meaningful set of fee for the service of RNI should be established.”

45. In reply to a query, the Committee were further informed that in pursuance of the recommendations of ERC, a proposal to impose some charges for various services given by RNI was formulated. However, when the Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law was consulted in this regard, that Ministry observed that for charging fees for statutory functions the Press & Registration of Books Act, 1867 needed to be amended as it did not provide for discharging statutory functions. Subsequently, it has been stated that any fee charged under a statutory provision would go to the Consolidated Fund of India, which would not be available for the organisation. The overall issue whether the levying of charges could be retained needed to be examined.

Non-Statutory Functions

Eligibility Certificate for import of Newsprint

46. According to the Ministry of I&B/RNI, under the Import of Newsprint Policy, the publisher intending to import newsprint are required to obtain Eligibility Certificates (E.Cs.). The E.C. is valid for the financial year in which it is issued. There is no quantity restriction on import of newsprint. ECs are issued for import of Standard and Glazed varieties of newsprint. The publishers are required to produce the E.C. issued by RNI to the Customs Authorities at the time of taking delivery of the consignment.

47. To a query regarding the criteria fixed for issuing the eligibility certificates, the Committee were informed that the permission to import newsprint was subject to Actual User condition to those who hold 'Registration Certificate' issued by the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI), Ministry of I & B, New Delhi, on the submission of necessary documents as prescribed in the Newsprint Policy enunciated by the Ministry of Commerce and guidelines issued by Ministry of I & B.

48. In this context, the Committee desired to know the impact of the Government's liberalised economy on the issue of Eligibility Certificates for importing newsprint. The Ministry in their reply have stated that Newsprint has been placed under Open General License (OGL) *w.e.f.* 01.05.1995 and Standard and Glazed newsprint can be imported by actual users without any quantity restriction. RNI is not required to issue any certificate for purchase of indigenous newsprint.

Issue of Essentiality Certificates

49. RNI is stated to have been assessing and certifying the essential requirements of newspaper establishments with regard to printing and machineries and materials. It issue Essentiality Certificates for import of:

- (i) Newspapers Page Transmission and reception Facsimile System or Equipment;
- (ii) Telephoto Transmission and Reception System or Equipment.

50. To a specific query, the Ministry have stated that RNI does not have technical staff to evaluate the details of above machinery. With fast changing technology, a judgement on essentiality may also be difficult. However, with increasing liberalisation in import policy and current account convertibility of foreign exchange, the provision of essentiality certificate itself has become redundant. At present, RNI only ensures that the machinery imported are installed at pre-declared premises. During the financial year 2003-2004, 12 E.Cs were issued.

No Newspaper Certificate

51. In a written reply, the Ministry have stated that the certificate of Registration is issued to all categories of registered publications. However, some publishers publishing magazines mainly on

Art & Culture, Religion, Spiritualism etc., seek permission for foreign contribution under FCRA. For this purpose they approach the Ministry of Home Affairs. The MHA requires a "No Newspaper Certificate" to be issued by the Registrar of Newspapers to certify that the contents of the publication have nothing to do with news and current affairs. According to the PRB Act, 'newspaper' means any printed periodical work containing public news or comments on public news. RNI examines each and every application on the basis of contents of the publication and also takes a declaration from the publisher that the magazine does not contain public news and current affairs. On satisfaction of these criteria a 'No Newspaper' Certificate issued. During the financial year 2003-2004, 17 "No Newspaper Certificates" were issued.

Press in India

52. RNI is required under Section 19G of PRB Act, to compile a report and submit the same to the Government of India. The Report titled "Press in India" is to be submitted by 31st December every year. The Report is compiled on the basis of the Annual Statements submitted by the publishers under Section-19E of the PRB Act. The Report highlights the state of Print Media in the country state-wise, language-wise & periodicity-wise. The ownership pattern is also highlighted in the Annual Report. The Committee noting details of only 5,500 publication in this report, although the RNI has 58,467 registered publications desired a clarification from the Ministry/RNI. In reply, the Ministry stated that the Press in India included the details of those publications which had given their Annual Statements. The Annual Statements of 5,500 publications had only been received.

Constraints faced by Publishers

53. One of the suggestion given by a Newspaper body during their evidence before the Committee was that facsimile edition of newspapers should be allowed. It was elaborated that now-a-days with latest Electronic Technology, many newspaper publishers had started printing and publishing newspapers from various centres with almost same contents to save the delivery time and to meet the needs of the local readers. In Delhi itself, most of the newspapers were being published with different local editions having by and large same contents with only locality specific changes to serve various localities. They desired that if a newspaper was transmitted through Electronic

Technology to even some other destination and was printed and published from another city, publishers should be allowed to use the same R.N.I. Registration number and publication should be treated as one publication. The moment a facsimile edition was done, RNI insisted on a separate RNI number. It was added that the definition of 'edition' was not very clear, *i.e.* whether it was the printing center or the facsimile edition. Therefore, there was a need to have a re-look at the PRB, Act.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation No. 1

AMENDMENTS TO THE PRESS AND REGISTRATION OF BOOKS ACT, 1867 (PRB)

The Committee are informed that PRB Act is an Act for regulation of Printing-presses and Newspapers, for the preservation of copies of books and newspapers printed in India, and for the registration of such books and newspapers. The Act was enacted in the year 1867 and is still in force for the regulation of printing presses and the newspapers.

The Committee are also informed that the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI) is the important organization which is keeping record of all available information and statistics on the presses and newspapers in India. The Registrar of Newspapers for India performs Statutory functions as enshrined under the Act of 1867 as well as Non-Statutory functions as enshrined under the GOI, MOF (Deptt. of Revenue) Notification No. 21.

Some of the functions like title verification, registration, clearance of foreign title for newspapers, receipt of Annual Statements, deletion of names of ceased publications, verification of circulation claims, facsimile edition etc. requires changes in the original Act for their smooth functioning and quick disposal. The above process and procedures could be made more efficient and transparent by making the whole process on line by using the Information Technology. The introduction of Information Technology and its wide spread usage for the above function does not find place in the original Act. It has become very essential that the Act be suitably reviewed and necessary changes incorporated.

The Committee are of the strong opinion that the smooth functioning of RNI and its timely disposal of its functions is the key to redressal of complaints from the newspapers organizations. The Committee feel that this will be possible only if the Act is suitably reviewed and amended to suit the present day on-line environment. The Committee, therefore, recommended that the Department should make all out efforts to amend the Act as early as possible.

Recommendation No. 2

Opening of more Regional offices

The Committee observe that RNI had earlier placed a proposal for opening up of regional offices in more locations in India but the same was pruned down due to administrative reasons. The Committee are informed that the bulk of the work with RNI lies in the verification of titles, which takes a long time. This delay is the cause of most of the complaints received from the publishers. They are further informed that this position would be tackled effectively, once the computerisation process is complete.

The Committee are of the opinion that for opening up more Regional offices more staff would not be needed and also more rent would not be required to be paid for accommodation etc. if the computerisation and on-line registration is carried out effectively and in a time-bound manner. Till such time the possibility of entrusting the job of verification of titles to some other division within the Ministry *e.g.* Field Publicity Division may be examined.

Recommendation No. 3

Plan Outlay

The Committee observe that there was no Plan budgetary provision for RNI during the 9th Plan. In the 1st year of the Xth Plan (2002-2003), Rs. 60 lakh were allocated under this head. The amount remained unutilized as the Plan scheme was not approved by the competent authority. Further, a proposed allocation of Rs. 132.00 lakh was reduced to Rs. 41.50 lakh due to redefinement of scheme and non-completion of the sanctioned work by CPWD in the year 2003-2004. The actual expenditure was only Rs. 36.73 lakhs. The Committee feel that there is a lot to be desired in RNI in the field of planning, as saving due to non-completion of work and redefinement does not appear to be good planning. It is in these circumstances, for the year 2004-2005 a meagre amount of Rs. 29.5 lakh has been allocated.

The Committee desire that RNI should undertake its budgetary exercise prudently and with due seriousness in a realistic manner. Plan development leads to improved quality and service. The Committee hope that the funds allocated in Tenth Plan for

computerization and renovation of RNI headquarters would be fully utilised as envisaged by the Ministry. They desire that RNI should make every effort to expend the allocated funds of Rs. 29.5 lakh during the year 2004-05 so as to improve quality of services rendered by it.

Recommendation No. 4

Verification of Titles

The Committee note that as per provision of PRB Act, 1867 applications for title verification are received by RNI through District Magistrates. The DM first verifies the details and sends the application to RNI in Delhi. RNI then verifies the availability of the titles. The Committee note that a lot of time is being consumed in this process causing great inconvenience to the publishers who keep waiting for title clearance to start a publication.

The Committee are aware that DMs have a number of important assignments apart from maintaining law and order in the Districts. Hence, it may not be possible for the DMs to give priority to the work assigned to them by RNI. The Committee, therefore, desire that for expeditious disposal of work, the existing procedure may be modified to the extent under which the publisher applies to the DM with a copy of the same endorsed to RNI so that RNI can at once start the job of title clearance subject to verification of other details from the District Magistrates. The Committee also desire that the Ministry should concentrate on expediting the on-line registration process to simplify the procedure.

Recommendation No. 5

On-line Registration.

The Committee are informed that National Informatics Centre (NIC) in consultation with RNI has developed software for on-line registration/verification of newspapers and it will take about two years to make it operational as the specific details are still to be worked out. The Committee are happy that RNI, in consonance with the need of the hour is taking a step in the right direction. However, the Committee feel that the time being taken for starting on-line registration/verification is on the higher side. In the opinion of the Committee, the facility should be implemented expeditiously. The

Committee, therefore strongly recommend that all sincere and concrete efforts should be made by the Ministry/RNI to gear up its machinery to face the challenges to make the online title verification operational as early as possible. The Committee would like to be apprised of the effective steps taken by the RNI in this regard quarterly.

Although the Committee observe that amendment in the PRB Act is necessary in order to make the procedure for registration/verification of newspapers on-line but they strongly feel that availability of the information technology newspapers/periodicals title from the data bank should immediately be made on-line. They, therefore, recommend, that review of PRB Act, 1867 should be given top priority and provisions be made in this regard after suitable modifications in the Act.

Recommendation No. 6

De-Blocking of Titles

The Committee find that for seeking registration, there is a provision that after the declaration is authenticated by the District Magistrate, the publisher is required to bring out the first issue of the newspaper within 42 days in case of daily or weekly and within 90 days for publications with a periodicity of more than a week, otherwise their titles would be cancelled. However, the procedure of cancellation being mechanical and lengthy, was not adhered to and resulted in blocking of titles. The first exercise to de-block unregistered titles was undertaken only in the year 1998, in which about 1.7 lakhs titles were de-blocked. Thereafter titles are being de-blocked after two years. The Committee desire that de-blocking should be carried out more frequently and publishers should not be denied titles on grounds other than genuine.

Recommendation No. 7

Refusal of title being same as a foreign title

The Committee note that one of the reasons for refusal of the title is that it is same as any published foreign title. This is being done as per the PRB Act, 1867 and pursuant to Cabinet decision taken in 1955, which says that any Indian edition of a foreign paper is not allowed.

It has been brought to the notice of the Committee that Ministry of I & B is reviewing the matter in view of the fact that if there is a copyright of a particular item, it is not merely the name, but also the Mast head, Logo and many other things, if they are not the same perhaps the foreign title can be allowed. The Committee would like to be apprised of the decision arrived at in this regard.

Recommendation No. 8

Annual Statements under the Act

The Committee note that under Section-19F of the Press and Registration of Book Act, 1867 Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI) is statutorily required to keep a record of registered publications including newspapers, weeklies etc., As per the records of RNI the number of such registered articles is 58,467. This contains many publications that have ceased to exist but RNI has no information about them. One of the reasons put forward by RNI is that the publishers have not submitted Annual Statements which is the basis on which RNI verifies the existence of newspapers.

The Committee further note that under the provisions in the PRB Act, 1867 Annual Statements containing details of publication, circulation, ownership, editors, price etc. are required to be submitted mandatorily by the publishers every year. However, during the year 2003-04, only 5591 Annual Statements from publishers were received by RNI which meant that existence of 52,876 newspapers, weeklies etc. was in doubt.

The Committee observe that although the problem of non-submission of Annual Statements by the publishers is not new to RNI, yet it has failed to take any concrete step to improve the situation. No serious thought has been given to take any action against the defaulting publishers by imposing penalty of Rs. 500 under the provision in PRB Act, 1867. The Committee do not accept the reason advanced by RNI that provision in imposing fine is a long drawn process and would only raise the harassment level. They desire that RNI should give wide publicity to the provisions of the PRB Act under which a fine can be imposed on erring publishers. Simultaneously, they opine that RNI should function strictly as per the provisions of PRB act, and wherever necessary provision of imposing the fine should be invoked to serve as an example to erring publishers.

The Committee also feel that the fine of Rs. 500 for non submission of Annual Statement by the publishers is too low and therefore amendment to the Act for raising the fine to a level that impinges upon the pocket of the publisher should be proposed.

The Committee are happy to note that RNI took special initiatives like placing advertisements in various media and a network of receiving centers was provided for annual statements at various regional/branch and field offices of RNI, PIB, DFP and DAVP to improve compliance of filling Annual Statements by publishers. As a result, 7156 Annual Statements were filed during 2002-03, which was the maximum number of Annual Statements ever received.

The Committee share the view of RNI that the situation of filing Annual Statements will improve when the procedure of registration will be on-line, as publishers would be able to fill a one page format even locally in any cyber-cafe. However they apprehend that this problem may continue even when the procedure becomes on-line because there is no stringent action proposed against those who will fail to do so. The Committee are of the view that RNI should take special initiatives as had been done in the year 2002 to give wide publicity to filing of Annual Statements by publishers.

Recommendation No. 9

Enhancing the minimum number of circulation figure

The Committee observe that there is a requirement of circulation of 2000 copies of a publication to submit an Annual Statement. The Committee further learn that the limit of 2000 copies is common for RNI and DAVP and if RNI raises the limit to a higher level, DAVP will have a problem because self-certification beyond 2,000 could be spurious as DAVP gives out advertisements and a large number of publications may go to them with fake circulation figures to try and take advantage of this situation. Keeping in view the increasing work load on RNI, the Committee recommend that the circulation figure for filing Annual Statements should be revised upwards to 5000 and the benchmark for self certification from 2000 to 5000 should be considered in consultation with DAVP. The Committee would also like to recommend that the circulation figures should be taken as actual number of copies sold/circulated in comparison to the figure arrived at by calculating the number of copies printed etc.

Recommendation No. 10

Deletion of ceased publications

The Committee observe that there is no provision in the Press & Registration of Books Act, 1867 for deletion of names of publications which cease to exist. The Committee however, understand that the Ministry is examining the matter regarding de-registration of such publications which have not filed even a single Annual statement during the last 6 years presuming that they are not being published, after giving a general notice. This would, however, not cancel the registration number as it would require suitable amendment in the PRB Act, 1867.

The Committee are in complete agreement with the views of the Ministry/RNI and strongly recommend that there is an apparent need to amend the PRB Act by incorporating suitable provision therein to give effect to deletion of names and registration of the ceased publications. The Committee recommend that pending such amendment in the PRB Act, RNI should go ahead with the de-registration of such publications which have not filed a single Annual Statement for the past 6 years. The Committee would like to be apprised of the progress made by the Ministry in this regard.

Recommendation No. 11

Verification of Circulation Claim

The Committee note that one of the important functions of RNI is to verify circulation claims made by the publishers. However, in view of the limited manpower available with RNI, RNI has confined the circulation checks to only cases referred to it by DAVP/PIB/State Govt. and some other undertakings. RNI also undertakes circulation checks on the basis of complaints. The Committee further note that out of the total 2658 cases referred in the year 2000, 2001 and 2002-03, 2628 cases were referred by DAVP, 5 cases were referred by State Governments, one case by PIB and the remaining 24 were miscellaneous complaints.

The Committee also note that the number of circulation checks done by RNI is decreasing year after year. During 2001, 2002-03 and 2003-04, 1679, 1304 and 788 circulation checks respectively could be carried out. Though RNI expects to touch the figure of 700 circulation checks during 2004-05, the Committee find that around 378 circulation checks would still remain pending. The Committee observe that the decline in the number of circulation checks is due to (i) the increased number of requests for spot checks received from DAVP, which has risen from 25 to 150 annually (one spot check takes time equal to

six document based checks); (ii) shortage of staff (two posts of Circulation Officers & Accounts Clerks are lying vacant in RNI); and (iii) non-availability of trained technical experts who have to be hired from outside.

Effective circulation check pre-supposes adequate trained manpower to ensure checks to be carried out at least once a year. The Committee desire that for effective verification of circulation claims of newspapers, besides redeployment of staff within RNI wherever and whenever required, services of PIB officers and technical experts from outside should also be availed of. The Committee also desire that RNI should ensure that circulation checks are done within a fixed time-frame to minimize the problems being faced by the publishers.

Recommendation No. 12

Publishers demands on verification

The Committee observe that newspaper bodies are facing difficulties as RNI has not been doing circulation checks on time. This in turn has directly affected the advertisement rates of publishers with the DAVP at the time of re-establishment of circulation after three years because DAVP insists on automatic reduction of rates, to the minimum rates, unless the circulation is authenticated by the RNI.

The Committee also observe that RNI carries out circulation checks through the number of distribution of sold copies to agents, hawkers, consumption, printing machinery etc. which the publishers find difficult to produce. The Committee feel that the verification should not lead to harassment so that publishers take to dubious methods of concealing their actual circulation. The Committee also feel that RNI should be regular in issuing the circulation certification so that publishers are not put to trouble of automatic reduction of rates by DAVP in the absence of such certification. The Committee recommend that if the delay for issuing the circulation certification rests on RNI, there should be an understanding with DAVP that they should continue to pay the already approved rates till the RNI authenticates the circulation.

Recommendation No. 13

Fee for title clearance or registration

The Committee are surprised to note that RNI is not charging any processing fee for performing various statutory and non-statutory

functions such as title verification, registration, brining out 'Press in India', circulation check, issue of eligibility certificates for import of newsprint, essentiality certificate for import of printing machinery etc. They find no reason why RNI should not charge for these services.

The Committee further note that the Expenditure Reforms Commission had recommended imposing some service charges for various services rendered by RNI and a proposal thereof was formulated by RNI. However, when the Ministry of Law, Department of Legal Affairs was consulted, they opined that the PBR Act does not provide for fee for discharging statutory functions and therefore fee cannot be charged without amending the Act.

The Committee feel that the proposal of imposition of fee for various statutory and non-statutory functions of RNI is a step in right direction and it should be actively considered by the Ministry. The Committee, therefore, desire that necessary amendments in the provisions of PRB Act should be made in this respect.

Recommendation No. 14

Facsimile Editions

The Committee have noted that RNI does not allow facsimile edition of newspapers published from different local destinations having almost the same contents with local specific changes to serve various localities with the same registration number. They have further noted that if a newspaper is transmitted through Electronic Technology to even some other destination and is printed and published from another city, publishers are not allowed to use the same RNI. Registration number. The Committee feel that the Ministry may take this into consideration while proposing amendments to the Act.

NEW DELHI;
31 March, 2005

10 Chaitra, 1927 (Saka)

M.M. PALLAM RAJU,
Chairman,
Standing Committee on
Information Technology.

MINUTES OF THE THIRTY-SECOND SITTING OF
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY (2003)

The Committee sat on Tuesday, the 25 November, 2003 from 1100 hours to 1300 hours in Committee Room 'C', Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri Somanth Chatterjee — *Chairman*

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Prof. Dukha Bhagat
3. Shri P.D. Elangovan
4. Shri Rama Mohan Gadde
5. Shri T. Govindan
6. Shri Jawahar Lal Jaiswal
7. Shri K.K. Kaliappan
8. Shri A. Krishnaswamy
9. Shri K. Balrama Krishna Murthy
10. Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab
11. Shri Sheeshram Singh Ravi
12. Shri C.N. Singh
13. Shri Nikhil Kumar Chowdhary
14. Shri Vanlal Zawma
15. Shri Charanjit Singh
16. Shri Arun Kumar
17. Dr. Bikram Sarkar

Rajya Sabha

18. Shri S.S. Ahluwalia
19. Shri Balbir K. Punj
20. Shri Dina Nath Mishra
21. Smt. Sarla Maheshwari
22. Shri Rajeev Shukla

SECRETARIAT

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Shri P.D.T. Achary | — | <i>Additional Secretary</i> |
| 2. Shri S.K. Sharma | — | <i>Joint Secretary</i> |
| 3. Shri S.K. Sharma | — | <i>Officer on Special Duty (IT)</i> |
| 4. Shri B.D. Swan | — | <i>Under Secretary</i> |

Representatives of Ministry of Information & Broadcasting

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Shri Pawan Chopra | — | Secretary |
| 2. Ms. Deepa Singh | — | Addl. Secretary & Financial Adviser |
| 3. Shri Sudhir Sharma | — | Joint Secretary (P&A) |
| 4. Shri G.D. Beliya | — | Press Registrar, RNI |
| 5. Shri Uday Moray | — | Dy. Press Registrar, RNI |
| 6. Shri Sahab Singh | — | Principal Information Officer, PIB |
| 7. Smt. Surinder Kaur | — | Director General, DAVP |

2. At the outset, the Chairman welcomed the Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Press Registrar, RNI and other officers of the Ministry of I & B to the sitting of the Committee.

3. Thereafter, Press Registrar, RNI made a presentation on the subject "Functioning of Registrar of Newspapers for India". Then the Members sought clarifications on issues like duties and obligations of RNI, staffing pattern and methodology applied to check circulation of newspapers and periodicals. The representatives of the Ministry responded to the queries raised by the Members.

4. The Chairman thanked the representatives of Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and RNI for appearing before the Committee as well as for furnishing information sought by it on the subject.

5. A verbatim record of the sitting has been kept.

6. The witnesses then withdrew.

The Committee then adjourned.

MINUTES OF THE SIXTEENTH SITTING OF THE STANDING
COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (2004-2005)

The Committee sat on Tuesday, 14 December, 2004 from 1500 hours to 1630 hours in Committee Room No. G-074, K-Block, Parliament Library Building, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri M.M. Pallam Raju — *Chairman*

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Shri Nikhil Chaudhary
3. Shri Mani Cherenamoi
4. Shri Sanjay Dhotre
5. Kunwar Jitin Prasad
6. Shri Kailash Joshi
7. Shri P.S. Gadhavi
8. Smt. P. Jayaprada Nahata
9. Col. G. Nizamuddin
10. Shri Chander Shekhar Sahu
11. Shri Tathagata Satpathy

Rajya Sabha

12. Shri Dara Singh
13. Shri K. Rama Mohana Rao

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri P.D.T. Achary — *Additional Secretary (P)*
2. Shri Raj Shekhar Sharma — *Deputy Secretary*
3. Shri K.L. Arora — *Under Secretary*
4. Shri D.R. Shekhar — *Assistant Director*

WITNESSES

Representatives of the Indian Newspaper Society (INS)

1. Shri Suresh Balakrishnan—Chairman, Delhi Regional Committee, INS
2. Shri R.K. Gupta—Deputy Secretary, INS
3. Mr. Harish Nagpal—General Manager, Hindustan Times, New Delhi

**Representatives of All India Small & Medium Newspapers
Federation (AISMNF)**

1. Shri Harbhajan Singh—President, AISMNF
2. Shri L.C. Bhartiya—State President of Federation Rajasthan Unit, Editor, Akashdeep
3. Shri Gurinder Singh, Vice President, AISMNF
4. Shri B.M. Sharma, Secretary-General, Editor—Sandhya Jyothi
5. Shri M.L. Pahwa, State President, Delhi Unit Editor, Rashtra Chhaya

**Representatives of All India Newspapers Editors'
Conference (AINEC)**

1. Shri Vishwa Bandhu Gupta, President
2. Shri Uttam Chand Sharma, Hony. Treasurer

2. At the outset, the Chairman welcomed the representatives of the Indian Newspaper Society (INS), All India Small & Medium Newspapers Federation (AISMNF) and All India Editors' Conference (AIEC) to the sitting of the Committee, invited their attention to the Direction 58 of the Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha and requested them to put forth their views on the "Functioning of Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI)".

3. Thereafter, the representatives of INS, AISMNF and AIEC briefed the Committee on matters relating to the delay in issuing of registration certificates and title clearance, verification system of circulations of newspapers, need to review the existing Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867 and gave suggestions to improve the functioning of RNI. The representatives also attended to the queries of the Members.

4. The Chairman, then, thanked the representatives of Indian Newspaper Society (INS), All India Small & Medium Newspapers Federation (AISMNF) and All India Newspaper Editors' Conference (AINEC) for appearing before the Committee and for providing valuable information desired by the Committee.

5. A verbatim record of the sitting has been kept.

The witnesses, then, withdrew.

MINUTES OF THE SEVENTEENTH SITTING OF THE STANDING
COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (2004-2005)

The Committee sat on Tuesday, 14 December, 2004 from 1630 hours to 1740 hours in Committee Room No. G-074, K-Block, Parliament Library Building, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri M.M. Pallam Raju—*Chairman*

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Shri Nikhil Chaudhary
3. Shri Mani Cherennamei
4. Shri Sanjay Dhotre
5. Kunwar Jitin Prasad
6. Shri Kailash Joshi
7. Shri P.S. Gadhavi
8. Smt. P. Jayaprada Nahata
9. Col. G. Nizamuddin
10. Shri Chander Shekhar Sahu
11. Shri Tathagata Satpathy

Rajya Sabha

12. Shri Dara Singh
13. Shri K. Rama Mohana Rao

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri P.D.T. Achary — *Additional Secretary (P)*
2. Shri Raj Shekhar Sharma — *Deputy Secretary*
3. Shri K.L. Arora — *Under Secretary*
4. Shri D.R. Shekhar — *Assistant Director*

WITNESSES

**Representatives of Ministry of Information & Broadcasting/
Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI)**

1. Shri S.K. Arora—Additional Secretary
2. Ms. Deepa Jain Singh—AS & FA
3. Shri P.K. Tripathi—JS(P & A)
4. Smt. Shakuntala Mahawal—PIO, PIB
5. Smt. Deepak Sandhu—Press Registrar, RNI
6. Shri Swagata Ghosh, Director, DAVP

2. The Chairman then welcomed the Secretary and other officers of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the Press Registrar, RNI and Director, DAVP to the sitting of the Committee and invited their attention to Direction 58 of the Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha. The Ministry then made a presentation on the subject "Functioning of Registrar of Newspapers for India". The Committee sought clarifications on issues like issue of registration certificates, title clearance, verification system of circulation of newspapers/periodicals etc. existing in RNI, staff constraints and also the need to review Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867 etc. The representatives of the Ministry/RNI responded to the queries raised by the Members.

3. The Chairman thanked the representatives of Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, RNI and DAVP for appearing before the Committee and for expressing free and frank views on the various issues raised by the Members.

4. A verbatim record of the sitting has been kept.

The Committee, then, adjourned.

MINUTES OF THE TWENTY THIRD SITTING OF THE STANDING
COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (2004-2005)

The Committee sat on Thursday, 9 March, 2005 from 1500 hours to 1900 hours in Committee Room No. 074, K-Block, Parliament Library Building, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Shri M.M. Pallam Raju—*Chairman*

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Shri Nikhil Chaudhary
3. Shri Mani Cherennamei
4. Dr. P.P. Koya
5. Shri P.S. Gadhavi
6. Smt. Nivedita S. Mane
7. Shri Chander Shekhar Sahu
8. Shri Tathagata Satpathy

Rajya Sabha

9. Shri Vijay J. Darda
10. Shri Ashwani Kumar
11. Shri K. Rama Mohana Rao
12. Shri Motiur Rahman

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri Raj Shekhar Sharma — *Director*
2. Shri K.L. Arora — *Under Secretary*
3. Shri D.R. Shekhar — *Under Secretary*

