

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2952

ANSWERED ON:11.12.2012

STING OPERATIONS

Ray Shri Rudramadhab ;Ray Shri Saugata;Thakur Shri Anurag Singh

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

- (a) whether journalists of private TV channels were arrested on extortion bid for telecasting TV news in favour of major steel company in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the action taken against these journalists;
- (c) whether the Government has laid down certain yardsticks for carrying out sting operations by private TV channels;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the monitoring agency involved in regulating such sting operations by private TV channels?

Answer

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

(a) & (b) Yes Sir. These reports have appeared recently in the media. It has also been reported that the matter is subjudice.

(c) to (e) All the channels are required to adhere to the Programme Code provided for in the Cable Television Networks Rules 1994, which lays down a wide range of Regulations for carrying programmes including news and current affairs programmes in the private satellite/cable TV channels. The Press Council of India has laid down "Guidelines on Sting Operations" in their "Norms of Journalistic Conduct", an extract of which is produced here as Annexure-I. Also, the News Broadcasters Association (NBA) in their Code of Ethics and Broadcasting Standards have adopted certain guidelines for conducting "sting operation" by their member channels. A copy of the Guidelines of NBA for conducting Sting Operations is placed in Annexure-II.

Annexure-I

ANNEXURE-I AS REFERRED TO IN REPLY OF PARTS (c) TO (e) OF LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 2952 FOR ANSWER ON 11.12.2012

PC's Norms of Journalistic Conduct

41 (B). Guidelines on Sting Operations

- i. A newspaper proposing to report a sting operation shall obtain a certificate from the person who recorded or produced the same certifying that the operation is genuine and bonafide.
- ii. There must be concurrent record in writing of the various stages of the sting operation.
- iii. Decision to report the sting operation should be taken by the editor after satisfying himself of the public interest of the matter and ensuring that report complies with all legal requirements.
- iv. Sting operation published in print media should be scheduled with an awareness of the likely reader in mind. Great care and sensitivity should be exercised to avoid shocking or offending the reader.

ANNEXURE-II

ANNEXURE-II AS REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (c) & (e) OF LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2952 FOR ANSWER ON 11.12.2012

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING STING OPERATIONS

In furtherance of the principles of self-regulation as contained in NBA's Code of Ethics and Broadcasting Standards and Specific Guidelines Covering Reportage, a member news channel may conduct a "sting operation", but only in conformity, with the following guidelines:

1. A sting operation may be conducted only if warranted in public interest;

2. A sting operation should be conducted only for exposing a wrong-doing;
3. A sting operation should not be used for gratuitously prying into peoples' private lives;
4. A sting operation may be resorted to only if there is no other effective overt means of collecting or recording the same information or news;
5. In conducting a sting operation, a news channel shall not indulge in inducing a person to commit a wrongful act not otherwise contemplated by the person;
6. Resort shall not be had to sleaze or sex or any illegal act as a means for carrying-out a sting operation;
7. The entire recordings of a sting operation, including edited and un-edited, audio and video footage, must be preserved, as they are for a period of 90 days or for such other period as may be necessary in a given case;
8. Recordings of a sting operation, including edited and un-edited, audio and video footage, shall not be tampered, manipulated, interposed, altered, distorted, morphed or otherwise doctored in any manner that may change the context, purport or meaning thereof;
9. There must be concurrent and contemporaneous recording in writing of the various stages of progress of a sting operation by the person in-charge of it ; and such written record shall also be preserved for a period of 90 days or for such other period as may be necessary in a given case;
10. A sting operation must not offend against the provisions of Section 5 of The Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act 1995 and Rule 6 of The Cable Television Networks Rules 1994 relating to "Programme Code" or any other law in force for the time being, including Section 24 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988;
11. A sting operation shall be telecast only if, and when there is ample evidence to prima facie demonstrate the culpability of a wrong-doer;
12. If a sting operation is found false or fabricated, all persons concerned with conducting the sting operation could be liable for punishment in accordance with the law.
13. No sting operation shall be conducted except with the prior approval and under the supervision of the head of the editorial team of a news channel, who shall also, along with other person concerned, be responsible for all consequences. The Managing Director and /or the Chief Executive Officer of the broadcasting company should also be kept fully informed of any sting operation being conducted by a news channel.