

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:452

ANSWERED ON:26.02.2013

UNETHICAL PRACTICE 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 alleged unethical practices and incessant misreporting being resorted to by a section in the print as well as electronic media;
- (b) if so, the details of such incidents including paid news reported along with the action taken thereon during each of the last three years and the current year, media-wise;
- (c) whether the Government has received proposals for seeking amendments to the Press Council Act, 1978 for arming it with more powers and bringing the electronic and the social media under the Press Council of India;
- (d) if so, the details thereof along with the action/steps taken by the Government in this regard;
- (e) whether the Government proposes to revise the existing guidelines/ constitute an effective statutory regulator to improve the functioning of the said media; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

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

(a) & (b): There have been reports of unethical practices being resorted to by the media. The Press Council of India, a statutory autonomous body set up for maintaining and improving the standards of newspapers & news agencies in India, has formulated 'Norms of Journalistic Conduct' which covers principles and ethics of journalism that should be adhered to by the media. Of late, there also have been a number of 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". The PCI has taken cognizance of this unethical practice and has released a Report on Paid News in 2010 after General Elections. Besides, a sub-committee of PCI has also undertaken a study on recent elections in Gujarat. The report of the study indicates that at least 126 confirmed cases of

'paid news' were identified by the Media Certification and Monitoring Committee (MCMC) and the State's election authority, on the basis of guidelines from Election Commission of India. Moreover, 61 candidates admitted having paid for news items in electronic and print media. In addition, a list of complaints regarding 'Paid News' in print media reported to the PCI during the last three years and the current year along with the action taken thereon is annexed.

(c) to (f): Press Council of India, having observed that the powers provided under Press Council Act, 1978 are not adequate for effective implementation of its directives, has proposed amendments to the Press Council Act, 1978 to bring electronic media and social media under its jurisdiction. Further, some of the major amendments proposed intend to arm the Council with more powers against those who violate journalistic ethics, such as withdrawal of Government advertisements, suspension of registration of newspapers and accreditation of the editor or journalist. The proposed amendments also envisage providing power to PCI to give directions in respect of conduct of any authority including the Government. The proposed amendments, if considered necessary, are required to be drafted carefully after wide consultations with the stakeholders and evolving consensus on the important issues relating to the media.

PCI have formed Norms of Journalistic Conduct and guidelines for Election reporting which should be adhered to by the media.