

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2947
ANSWERED ON:13.03.2015
PAID NEWS
Girri Shri Maheish;Shirole Shri Anil

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

- (a) whether the Government has taken note of the use of paid news in print and electronic media in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government proposes to set up any committee to study the matter relating to paid news;
- (d) if so, the details thereof and the time by which it is likely to be set up; and
- (e) the other steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to check the menace of paid news in the country?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
[[COL RAJYAVARDHAN RATHORE (Retd.)]]

(a) to (e): The Press Council of India (PCI), a statutory autonomous body has been set up to maintain and improve the standards of newspapers and also to inculcate principles of self-regulation among the press. The PCI, in view of the wide ramifications of the issue of paid news has deliberated upon the issue and has released its 'Report on Paid News'. The major recommendations contained in the Report are follows: -

Representation of the People Act, 1951, be amended to make incidence of paid news a punishable electoral malpractice

The PCI must be fully empowered to adjudicate the complaints of 'Paid News' and give final judgment in the matter

Press Council Act be amended to make its recommendations binding and electronic media be brought under its purview; and

PCI should be reconstituted to include representatives from electronic and other media.

The PCI takes cognizance, suo moto or on complaints of contents in print media which are in violation of the norms and which also includes cases of paid news. The PCI adjudicates upon such cases under section 14 of the Press Council Act, 1978.

As regard electronic media, all TV channels are required to comply with the Programme & Advertisement Codes as prescribed in the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 and the Rules framed thereunder, failing which action can be taken as per the terms and conditions of permission/registration.

The Election Commission has also taken cognizance of the PCI's Report on Paid News and has initiated measures to check incidents of election time paid news. The Commission has issued instructions to Chief Electoral Officers of all the States to constitute District level and State level Media Certification and Monitoring Committees (MCMC) for scrutiny of paid news. Shri Krishna Prasad, Member, Press Council of India has recently been nominated on the MCMC by the Chairman, PCI. 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 advertisements in the garb of news coverage appearing during the election period. In addition, the Commission has also constituted a Committee at its own level to examine references from State level MCMCs and to support policy formulation for issues related to paid news and those related to usage of electronic and print media for campaigning by parties and candidates.

The Commission also issues a Press Note in all the general elections starting from the year 2012 for the Media to be observed during elections. The Press Note incorporates the guidelines issued by the PCI and News Broadcasters Association for print and electronic media respectively.

The issue of electoral reforms in its entirety including paid news has been referred to the Law Commission of India by the M/o Law & Justice for its recommendation.

In addition, based on the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Information Technology, inclusion of provisions in the Press and Registration of Books and Publications Bill to check the incidents of paid news would also be pursued as per extant guidelines.