

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**  
**MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING**  
**RAJYA SABHA**  
**QUESTION NO 13.12.2010**  
**ANSWERED ON**  
**TACKLING OF PAID NEWS .**

3622

Shri Tariq Anwar

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

- (a) whether it is a fact that Government is considering to tackle the paid news and money power;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether it is also a fact that the expenditure of candidates would also be scrutinized;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) if not, the reasons therefor?

**ANSWER**

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION & BROADCASTING

(SHRI C.M. JATUA)

(a) & (b): The Government, in pursuance of the objective of preserving the freedom of press and maintaining and improving the standard of newspapers in India and to inculcate the principles of self regulation among the press, has set up Press Council of India (PCI)- an autonomous body under the Press Council Act, 1978. The PCI has deliberated upon the issue and has released its `Report on Paid News`. The major recommendations made in the Report are as below:-

Representation of the People Act, 1951, be amended to make incidence of paid news a punishable electoral malpractice. The Press Council of India 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 Press Council of India should be reconstituted to include representatives from electronic and other media.

The recommendations of the Report are under consideration of the Government.

(c) to (e): The Election Commission has issued instructions on 08th June, 2010 and further on 23rd September 2010 to all the Chief Electoral Officers of the States on measures to check paid news during the elections. The Commission has directed that maximum vigilance may be observed by making use of the existing provisions of law so that the incidence of `Paid News` or surrogate advertisements in print and electronic media in the context of elections is arrested. The Commission has decided that the `Paid news` would fall in the category of `other document` liable to be included in `election pamphlet & poster` for the purpose of section 127A (1) of the Representation of People Act, 1951.

The Election Commission has directed that District level committees may be constituted in each district as soon as election is announced, to do vigorous scrutiny of all newspapers published or having circulation in the district in order to locate political advertisement in the garb of news coverage appearing during election period. District Electoral Officers (DEOs) have been directed to closely monitor advertisements in print media in any form including surrogate advertising in the form of news and to serve notices to candidate/political parties, so that the expenses incurred thereon are duly reflected in the account of the candidate/party concerned.

The District Committee should also keep watch on the election news, features, etc. on the electronic media in the district and in case of disproportionate coverage to the speech/activities of a candidate on television/radio channels which is likely to yield electoral benefit to a particular candidate, the candidate would be served notices to explain as to why the coverage should not be treated as advertisement. The Chief Electoral Officers have been instructed to strengthen the Committee constituted for previewing, scrutinizing and verifying all the advertisements by individual contesting candidates or political parties so as to also scrutinize the news reports in electronic media, which bear the character of political advertisement.

Further, the Election Commission has recently issued instructions to monitor election expenditure during General elections to Bihar Legislative assembly and Bye-elections to Lok Sabha seat in Bihar & Uttar Pradesh Legislative assembly.