

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2195
TO BE ANSWERED ON 23/09/2020**

**SEPARATE REGULATORY MECHANISM ON NEWS COVERAGE OF
COVID-19**

2195. DR. SHASHI THAROOR:

Will the Minister of **INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING**

be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has sought to set up a separate regulatory mechanism for issuing a blanket directive to the Indian media for all the news coverage on COVID-19 in a petition to the Supreme Court;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has expressed grave concern over Government's recommendations to pre-censor unplugged news coverage during this national emergency;
- (d) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto; and
- (e) the details of cases where movement of journalists were restricted since the beginning of nationwide lockdown on March 25, 2020?

ANSWER

**MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE;
MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING; AND
MINISTER OF HEAVY INDUSTRIES AND PUBLIC ENTERPRISES
(SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR)**

(a) to (d): The Hon'ble Supreme Court while considering the Writ Petition (Civil) No.468 of 2020 had sought status report on the steps taken by the Union of India, in pursuance of which the Central Government on 31.03.2020 filed a detailed status report and the Apex Court expressed satisfaction with the proactive and timely action taken by the Union of India for preventing the spread of COVID-19. The Supreme Court in its decision of 31.03.2020 observed as under:-

“we expect the media (print, electronic or social) to maintain a strong sense of responsibility and ensure that unverified news capable of causing panic is not disseminated. A daily bulletin by the Government of India through all media avenues including social media and forums to clear the doubts of people would be made active within a period of 24 hours as submitted by the Solicitor General of India. We do not intend to interfere with the free discussion about the pandemic, but direct the media refer to and publish the official version about the developments.”

The Press Information Bureau (PIB) under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting issues Press Releases and conducts Press Conference on a regular basis on all aspects relating to prevention and management of COVID-19. Further, the PIB has set up a COVID Fact Check Unit on 01.04.2020 which has since then received and disposed over 7000 cases of COVID related fact checks.

(e) The COVID related Guidelines issued by Ministry of Home Affairs on 24.03.2020 exempted Print and Electronic Media from the list of commercial and private establishments that were directed to be closed down. Further, Press Council of India issued an advisory on 24.03.2020 to all State Governments and Administrative authorities to take necessary measures/actions to ensure continuity/smooth functioning of the print media and news agencies within their jurisdiction.
