GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 5490
TO BE ANSWERED ON 05.04.2022

PAID NEWS

5490. SHRI BHOLANATH (B.P.SAROJ):

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

(a) whether it is a fact that frequent publication of advertisements applauding achievements of the candidate during elections comes under the category of paid news and if so, the details thereof;
(b) whether the Government proposes to amend Section 123 of the Representation of People Act, 1951 and Section 15 of the Press Council Act, 1978 to stop the practice of "Paid News", if so, the details thereof; and
(c) whether the Government is considering to appoint Lokpal (Ombudsman) for the media organizations and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING; AND MINISTER OF YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS
(SHRI ANURAG SINGH THAKUR)

(a)   Election Commission of India has informed that advertisements are not Paid News and expenses on candidates' advertisements on TV/ Cable Channels/ newspapers owned by political parties or their functionaries/ office bearers are included in election expenditure statement.

(b)   The Press Council of India has recommended amendment to the Representation of People Act, 1951 in order to make the incidence of paid news a punishable electoral malpractice. The Election Commission of India has also recommended for including 'Paid News' in the category of corrupt practices or electoral offences. Law Commission of India in its 255th report on 'Electoral Reform' has inter alia recommended ban on paid news.

Ministry of Law and Justice has informed that electoral reforms are continuous and ongoing process that involves a major policy decision in consultation with all the stakeholders in the matter and the same are considered and implemented through various amendment Acts from time to time.

(c)   There is no proposal for having a separate Ombudsman for media organizations.

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