

Legislation for paid news items

*208. SHRI M.P. ACHUTHAN: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the paid news item numbers are increasingly appearing in both print and electronic media;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government is contemplating bringing a suitable legislation to deal with the situation; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI) : (a) to (d) There 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 the "paid news syndrome".

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 released a 'Report on Paid News' on 30th July 2010.

The Report has defined the 'Paid News' as, 'Any news or analysis appearing in any media (Print & Electronic) for a price in cash or kind as consideration.' The PCI, after analyzing the issue has made the following recommendations:

1. Representation of the People Act 1951 be amended to make incidence of paid news a punishable electoral malpractice.
2. The Press Council of India must be fully empowered to adjudicate the complaints of "paid news" and give final judgment in the matter.
3. Press Council Act be amended to make its recommendations binding and electronic media be brought under its purview, and

4. Press Council of India should be reconstituted to include representatives from electronic and other media.

In addition, the Report has suggested various other measures to curb the menace of paid news, which include:

- Setting up of a Special Cell in Election Commission of India for action against complaints of paid news.
- Self-regulation by media to check the phenomenon of paid news.
- The guidelines formulated by PCI on election reporting must be adhered to by the media organizations.
- Education of voters so as to enable them to differentiate between paid news items from genuine news.
- Awareness generation amongst the stakeholders.

Mega food parks in Vidarbha

*209. SHRI VIJAY JAWAHARLAL DARDA: Will the Minister of FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Mega Food Park scheme launched in 2008, has provided necessary infrastructure for food processing on a pre-identified cluster basis;

(b) if so, whether there are plans to setup such food parks in Vidarbha, which would establish an efficient and sustainable supply chain to eliminate farmers' suicides due to inaccessibility of marketing facilities at remunerative prices; and

(c) whether the State Governments are providing facilities like land, power, etc. at concessional rates to encourage setting up of such food Parks?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES (SHRI SUBODH KANT SAHAY): (a) Yes Sir. Government has approved establishment of 10 Mega Food Parks in the first phase out of 30 Mega Food Parks envisaged for the 11th Five Year Plan. The States selected for the first phase of