

the quality of programmes. DD has introduced a number of programmes in various genres and formats like travelogue, documentaries, Short Films, health shows, live-phone-in programmes etc., which has resulted in increase in viewership of many channels of Doordarshan as per Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) ratings.

(c) Modernization of Doordarshan is a continuous process and schemes in this regard are formulated and implemented from time to time. Modernization plan covers a broad spectrum, which, *inter alia*, includes digitalization; adoption of new technologies at par with international standards; replacement of old/ outlived equipment and upgradation etc.

Paid News During Election

†211. SHRI P. L. PUNIA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that repeatedly publishing an advertisement during the election which praises a candidate for his/her achievements, comes under the category of paid news;

(b) whether Government intends to amend Section 123 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and Section 15 of Press Council Act, 1978 in order to curb paid news if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government is considering to appoint Lokpal for media organisations, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR): (a) Election Commission of India has informed that publishing an advertisement during election in favour of any candidate does not come within the definition of paid news. During election, expenditure incurred on such advertisement published by candidate/political party/their agent is added into their election expenditure account.

(b) The Press Council of India has recommended amendment to the Representation of the People Act, 1951 in order to make 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.

(c) There is no such proposal.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.