

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO: 385

ANSWERED ON: 19.07.2018

Telecast of Fake News

NISHIKANT DUBEY

RAVINDRA VISHWANATH GAIKWAD

RAVINDRA KUMAR PANDEY

Will the Minister of

INFORMATION AND
BROADCASTING

be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether it is a fact that fake news on a large scale are being telecast by various television channels in the country and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether the Government has reviewed the fake news telecast by private news channels in the country during the last three years and if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the number of cases of fake news telecast reported during the said period along with the action taken by the Government thereon; and
- (d) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to curb fake news?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION & BROADCASTING

[COL RAJYAVARDHAN RATHORE (Retd.)]

(a) to (d). As per existing regulatory framework, content telecast on private satellite TV channels is regulated as per Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 and Cable Television Network Rules, 1994 framed thereunder. The Act does not provide for pre-censorship of any programmes and advertisements telecast on such TV channels. However, it prescribes that all programmes and advertisements telecast on such TV channels should be in conformity with the prescribed Programme Code and Advertising Code enshrined in the aforesaid Act and the rules framed thereunder (The Programme and Advertising Codes are available on the Ministry's website: www.mib.nic.in). The said Codes contain a wide range of parameters to regulate programmes and advertisements including the content considered to be fake news on TV channels. In this regard, specific provision made in the Programme Code is given as under:

“Rule 6 1(d) provides that no programme should be carried in the cable service which contains anything obscene, defamatory, deliberate, false and suggestive innuendos and half-truths.”

The Ministry has set up Electronic Media Monitoring Centre (EMMC) to monitor the content of private TV channels with reference to the violation of Programme and Advertising Codes. An Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) has

Contt.....2/-

-2-

also been set up in the Ministry to take cognizance suo-moto or look into specific complaints regarding violation of the Programme and Advertising Codes by private TV channels. The IMC has representatives from the Ministries of Home Affairs, Defence, External Affairs, Law, Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare, Consumer Affairs, Information & Broadcasting and a

representative from the industry in Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI). The IMC meets periodically and recommends action in respect of violation of Programme and Advertising Codes by private TV channels. Apart from this, the Ministry has also issued directions to States to set up District level and State level Monitoring Committees to monitor content telecast on cable TV channels.

Action is taken against TV channels whenever any violation of the aforesaid Programme and Advertising Codes is established. Ministry usually decides and takes action keeping in view the recommendations of IMC. Details of action taken against TV channels for violation of Rule 6 (1)(d) of the Programme Code by private satellite TV channels during the last three years and the current year is enclosed at Annexure.

Besides above, Government has also encouraged self-regulation in electronic media by Broadcasting Industry. News Broadcasters Association (NBA) which represents some private news and current affairs TV channels, as part of its self-regulatory mechanism, has set up News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA) to consider complaints against or in respect of broadcasters relating to content of any news and current affairs telecast on TV channels. NBA has also formulated a Code of Ethics & Broadcasting Standards covering a wide range of principles to self-regulate news broadcasting. The Code of Ethics and Broadcasting Standards lay down, inter-alia, that the purpose of putting together the principles of self-regulation is to avoid compromising the genre of television news by broadcasting content that is malicious, biased, regressive, knowingly inaccurate, hurtful, misleading, or aimed at wilfully concealing a conflict of interest. NBA has also issued an advisory dated 12.5.2016 to its members on the issue of fake news. Through this advisory, NBSA has informed all its members that manufacturing, doctoring, tailoring, tutoring or creating any kind of false or fake news or any attempt to do so by any editor, anchor, reporter, stringer, employee or associate of a broadcaster, or any attempt to coerce, threaten and browbeat any person or institution, or to extract false or distorted statements or allegations will be considered as serious misconduct on the part of the broadcaster, irrespective of whether any 'feed' or 'report' so generated/created is aired or not. It also reminded them to brief, teach and inculcate ethical standards to its new employees (anchors, reporters and stringers) and also to hold refresher sessions about the same for the existing employees periodically.

The existing provisions contained in the Programme & Advertising Codes and the existing mechanism are considered adequate to regulate content of private satellite TV channels including fake news.
