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Title: Regarding 'Paid News' in Newspapers & Channels affecting the functioning of Democracy.

DR. TARUN MANDAL (JAYNAGAR): Madam Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of the House and of the Union Government to a very sensitive and an important issue of 'paid news'. That means, if you give some money to the Press or media people, you can create your news, which is being done in our newspapers and TV channel, which is undermining democracy and it is a fraud on Indian people. It has already acquired a menacing proportion as deposed by one of the Opposition leaders that "it started out as an aberration, went on to become a disease and is now an epidemic."

The phenomenon of 'paid news' emergence traces back over many years. The Press Council of India recently did an investigation which revealed that some of the biggest media groups in the country are involved in indulging this 'paid news' practices.

That report of the Press Council of India also said: "The phenomenon of 'paid news' goes beyond the corruption of individual journalists and media companies. It has become pervasive, structured and highly organized, and in the process is undermining democracy in India."

The report also indicated that the deception or fraud has three levels. Firstly, the publication or views of the Television programme is deceived into believing that what is essentially an advertisement is taken to be as an independent news.

Secondly, by not officially declaring the expenditure by any candidate for a 'paid news', thereby it is violating the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961.

Thirdly, by not accounting the money received from candidates, the concerned media company is violating the provisions of the Companies Act, 1956 and the Income Tax Act, 1961.

MADAM SPEAKER: Please conclude now.

DR. TARUN MANDAL (JAYNAGAR): I would like to make a demand to the Government that it should activate the Election Commission of India to take proper action, and also the Press Council of India and the Government of India must look into this serious matter as the Press and media are being the Fourth Pillar of democracy.