

PRESS RELEASE

“Karachi: Wednesday, May 3, 2017: Pakistan Broadcasters Association has always been in favour of freedom of expression but has been strongly opposed to allowing media to be used to further any illegal and criminal intent. Three years ago one of the biggest International Scams was exposed by New York Times. This exposed Axact and its owners of running a Fake Degree/Diploma Mill through which they raked in millions of dollars. This is the same money that was used to finance and launch the TV Channel Bol.

PBA was shocked at the revelation that the proceeds of crime were being channelled to launch and finance media channels to buy influence and blackmail anyone who threatens to expose this criminal scam.

Hence, PBA decided to get involved to protect the integrity and sanctity of the Media Industry which is regarded as the 4th pillar of the state. Hence PBA moved the Islamabad High Court for revocation of licenses of Axact backed channels and has since been fighting to prevent entry of this criminal money into Pakistani media industry.

Finally, today, PBA on behalf of all electronic media industry of Pakistan, expresses satisfaction over the step finally taken by PEMRA to revoke the licenses being held by individuals who supervised fraud and extortion on an international scale.

PBA wants to further specifically point out that Axact, the parent company of Bol, has been prosecuted in USA by US Justice Department and an Axact employee has confessed to being part of a 140 million dollar fake degree scam run through Axact's Pakistan offices. And that evidence against Axact has also been handed over to the FIA by FBI.

PBA has also earlier raised many important questions through a published Ad and had asked PEMRA and Government to probe if Axact channel had customs receipts and NOC from PEMRA for any of its broadcasting equipment that all other PBA members had to get as per law.

PBA had also appealed to the courts, PEMRA and Govt that Axact channels should also be investigated for their sources of funds. Axact Channels have been airing for more than 6 months themselves saying on air that they are not accepting any advertising due to their “patriotism”, but where are the expenses being paid from? Authorities in PEMRA and SECP should ask through what is their source of income as their paid up capital is in millions, yet billions of rupees have been spent on infrastructure and other expenses, mostly all in cash.

Choudry Nisar Ali Khan (Interior Minister), Dr. Atta Ur Rahman (Co-Chairman Science, Technology and Innovation Committee of United Nations Economic Social Commission for Asia and Pacific), Jehan Ara (President Pakistan Software House Association), Anushe Rahman (Minister of IT), Aitezaz Ahsan (Senator, PPP), Dr Arif Alvi (PTI), New York Times, Guardian, BBC and Pakistani media all exposed Axact as a Fake Degree Company masquerading as an IT company.

Bol backed by Axact was also the biggest proponent of hate speech and intolerance and a threat to free and independent media in Pakistan and has been condemned by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, PBA, APNS, CPNE and others. PEMRA itself declared Bol as carrying hate speech again and again.

PBA calls on the Government to prosecute all those responsible for committing these crimes so that things like this can be prevented in future. PBA also hopes that a proper inquiry would now be initiated to investigate the crimes committed, laws broken and how criminal money was generated, brought into Pakistan and used to finance media channels like this. This whole ugly scam has brought a bad name to Pakistan and to Pakistan's IT and Media Industry.

PBA believes that freedom of speech is a critical element of any democracy. However unscrupulous elements entering media in the guise of that freedom to whiten their black money and to blackmail the judiciary, bureaucracy, government and media to hide their own crimes, must NOT be allowed. On world press freedom day, this is a setback for those, who in the guise of freedom of speech were trying to get away with one of the most audacious international level criminal scams in the history of Pakistan".

Sincerely for,
Pakistan Broadcasters Association



Muhammad Ali Butt
Executive Director