

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Monday March 9, 1992/ Phalgun
19, 1913 (Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at
Eleven of the Clock

[MR. SPEAKER in the Chair]

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[Translation]

Varadan Committee Report

* 163. SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD
YADAV:
SHRI BARE LAL JATAV:

Will the Minister of INFORMATION
AND BROADCASTING be pleased to
state:

(a) whether the report of the Varadan
committee regarding electronic media has
been considered by the Government;

(b) if so the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons for the delay?

[English]

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND

BROADCASTING (KUMARI GIRIJA VYAS):
(a) to (c). The report of the Inter-Departmen-
tal Committee on introduction of competition
in the Electronic Media is under the active
consideration of the government.

[Translation]

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV:
Mr. Speaker, sir, the answer given by the
hon. Minister is very unsatisfactory and
confusing because the original question
which was asked, has not been replied to.
The question was what is the report of the
Varadan Committee regarding electronic
media and the details thereof. In this con-
coction the hon. Minister did not reply at all
and has stated only in his reply that the report
of the Inter-departmental Committee on intro-
duction of an element of competition in the
electronic media is under active considera-
tion of the Government. I would like to know
a very specific point from the hon. Minister
whether anything has been mentioned in the
report of Varadan Committee to provide
autonomy to the radio and television regard-
ing news bulletins and to improve their qual-
ity. If not what alternative measures are
proposed to be taken by the government in
this regard?

KUMARI GIRIJA VYAS: Hon. Mr.
Speaker sir, the question was regarding
implementation of the Varadan Committee
report. The announcement regarding the
intention of the Government to provide broad-
casting rights to the appropriate Organisa-
tions for introducing a competitive system in
Government T. V. and Radio channels and a
proposal to make available some more alter-
natives to the audience of T.V. and Radio
effect a drastic change in the broadcasting

policy of the government. For this purpose a high powered inter-departmental Committee under the Chairmanship of Mr. Varadan, Additional Secretary had been set up on the 3rd December 1990. The Committee has submitted its report on the 24th October 1991. I have stated the something in my reply that the Government is committed that is the appropriate organisations should be invited for introduction of an element of competition in electronic media. This report contains a lot of recommendations and alternatives and I would like to point out one or two of them. One is that priority should be given to set up new T.V. and Radio channels in various parts of the country for internal telecast and broadcast subject to efficiency of Directors. Second alternative is that the second channel i.e. channel No. 4 can be leased out to appropriate licence holders in Metropolitan cities and besides it additional radio channels including independent F.M. Centres may also be given to them. One alternative is to permit the Agencies or Consortium to set up transmitter ranges at various places in the country.

Further, the Varadan committee finds it suitable to lease out transponder on some satellites for direct telecasting the developmental and educational programmes through satellite. But despite the Committees report as several life. But despite the Committee's report, as several Ministries are associated with it, the report has been sent to the Prime Minister for getting approval in respect of other departments. As soon as we get the approval we will implement it after considering the various alternatives.

SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV: Mr. speaker sir my original question regarding autonomy has not been replied to I would like to ask a second question whether the hon. Minister thinks that if the Varadan Committee report is implemented, the electronic media will get autonomy. If it gets autonomy how will it get and whether you want to implement the Prasar Bharti Act again and if not, what are the reasons therefor?

KURMARIGIRLJA VYAS: Hon. Speaker,

Sir both the questions are quite different. In the election manifesto of our party, especially in the information letter which was issued, it was clearly stated that we are bound to give various kinds of autonomy and the Prasar Bharti bill is one of them, but autonomy does not imply competition. Along with autonomy, our programmes should be intrusting, with a view to being in competition, we should make use of other channels as well. Varadan Committee was set up for this very purpose. Autonomy is a totally different question, competition is a completely separate issue and the Varadan Committee was set up for introduction of competition in Electronic media.

[*English*]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI AJIT ANJA): Sir, I would like to add to the ply given by my colleague.

The question of the hon. Member was regarding autonomy and whether anything in this regard was recommended by the Varadan Committee. Sir, the Varadan Committee was set up for different purposes: (a) how could we in India, meet the challenges from the other foreign satellites coming in? and (b) whether public corporations can be allowed to be floated to meet the competition either with Prasar Bharti or with the foreign satellites coming in. These are the two main purposes.

SHRI SARAT CHANDRA PATTANAYAK: Sir, may I know from the Hon. Minister whether the Vardan Committee has made any recommendation about TV networks? If so, the Government's reaction thereto.

KUMARI GIRLJA VYAS: The Government is positive about this.

[*Translation*]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Hon. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has stated two things the first relates to the private

channel and the second is the example of his party's election manifesto you people do not even read your election manifesto while we read your election manifesto more carefully They have stated in their manifesto

[English]

"The offer of broadcasting and telecasting right to the public corporation to compete with Prasar Bharati "

[Translation]

Last time you had given a reply and you had also stated that you would be implementing it in one year's time Now only four months are left in the year and in this period of four months, formalities regarding appointment of the board of directors, the transfer of assets and the test of the employees have to be completed Sir through you, I should like to know from the hon Minister about the estimated expenditure on private channels and the names of the parties who are going to finance this expenditure Is it a fact that an estimated expenditure of RS 3000 crores is involved in it? As far as the Prasar Bharati Bill is concerned you have stated that within a period of one year you will implement it I would like to know from the Government about the progress made so far in this regard

[English]

SHRI AJIT PANJA So far as the first portion of the question of the hon Member is concerned, the details as to how much could be spent by the private channel or the public corporation and other things have not yet come About 86 parties or public corporations or other individuals have shown their interest to participate In that also, various ideas have been floated Some have opted for a second national net work, which we are terming as N 2 Some of them have opted for a particular area a like metropolitan cities, either in Bombay or Madras or Calcutta or Delhi Some have asked for sharing the time according to their financial position, according to the financial capacity they have

got Therefore, the actual amount is not yet known, But the Government has projected a plan for a second national network, N-2 which is about Rs 2700 crore And we have given this to the Planning Commission The Planning Commission has orally approved this We have not yet received the written conformation from them This is the position

so far as Prasar Bharati Act is concerned, time has not yet expired The four months' time is not a short time and I am sure that within that time, The question of implementing the Prasar Bharati Act would be unanimous We have to talk to the Opposition The details of the work in the Department have been compiled We are according to the advice of PMO, referring it to the CCPA for the purpose of consideration Immediately we get the advice of the CCPA, naturally we will act accordingly

[Translation]

Speed Post Facility

+

*164 SHRI RATIAL VARMA
SHRI K H MUNNIYAPPA,

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state

(a) the names of cities where Speed Post facility is available at present in the country, Statewise,

(b) whether the government propose to introduce this facility in other cities during the current year and

(c) if so, the names of such cities, State-wise?

[English]

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI P V RANGAYYA NAIDU) (a) A state wise list of cities, towns where speed post facility is available in the country at present is enclosed as statement