

[English]

National Media Policy

212. SHRI RUPCHAND PAL :

SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH :

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state

(a) whether a Sub-Committee of Consultative Committee attached to his Ministry on the National Media Policy has submitted its report,

(b) if so, the details of the recommendations made;

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto, and

(d) if not the time by which the report is likely to be received?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C M IBRAHIM) (a) to (d) The Sub-Committee of the Consultative Committee for Ministry of Information & Broadcasting has submitted A Working Paper on National Media Policy to the Chairman of the Consultative Committee i.e. Minister of Information & Broadcasting on 29th March, 1996 for consideration in accordance with the terms and conditions for the functioning of the Sub-Committee. In the meantime the Lok Sabha was dissolved and General Elections took place for the constitution of the new Lok Sabha. The Consultative Committee of MPs for the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting is yet to be constituted. The Working Paper on National Media Policy will be placed before it for consideration/discussion as soon as it is constituted. A summary of the recommendations is enclosed as statement.

STATEMENT

Summary of Recommendations

The broadcasting should observe a greater degree of responsibility and sensitivity to Indian culture and ethos and cater to the developmental requirement of the country. It should achieve an Indian personality in telecasting/broadcasting.

(Para 6.4.1.1)

9.2 There should be a regulatory body to oversee both public and private telecasting/broadcasting. In this connection, the Sub-Committee noted that the provisions of the Prasar Bharati Act, which was unanimously passed by Parliament in 1990 should be kept in mind while framing the regulatory mechanism which should be an independent autonomous authority. The Sub-Committee is of confirmed opinion that no recourse should be taken by the Government to dilute the provision of the Prasar Bharati Act, 1990. This regulatory body may

be set up to ensure adherence to the programmes/advertisement codes and other stipulations. This body or similar independent body may also develop an effective mechanism for public grievance redressal as well as implementation of its recommendations in respect of such grievances.

(Para 6.4.1.2)

9.3 Adequate care should be taken to enable the setting up of non-commercial broadcasting stations to be run by universities, educational institutions, panchayats/local bodies, State Governments, etc.

(Para 6.4.1.3)

9.4 The Sub-Committee recognises that for public broadcasting, adequate funding in the form of state support is necessary. The content of programmes or software is often dictated by the funding and therefore the Sub-Committee strongly recommends that this aspect should receive the attention of the government and an institutionalised system be worked out.

(Para 6.4.1.4)

9.5 The national broadcasters-Aakashvani and Doordarshan-should bear the responsibility to offer a high quality public service broadcasting that informs, educates and entertains the people and also provide coverage to national events like the Republic Day Parade. Taking into account the reach of the national broadcasters, primacy and exclusive responsibility should be provided to them in the matter of coverage of national events like Republic Day Parade, Independence Day, the President's Address to both the Houses of Parliament, etc.

(Para 6.4.1.5)

9.6 The rights-obligations and exclusivity of the national broadcasters should be codified through law.

(Para 6.4.1.6)

9.7 Whereas the broad policy approach should be the same for radio and television, minor variations/differences can be made in view of the difference in reach and impact of the two media. Programme/advertisement codes should be similar, if not same. The viewer-listener interest should be kept in mind while spacing the advertisements. A new production style which is people-oriented should be developed.

(Para 6.4.1.7)

9.8 In tune with the policy framework suggested here, the Indian private sector, State Government, NGOs/Local Self Government should be allowed to enter the field of broadcasting/telecasting.

(Para 6.4.1.8)

9.9 Appropriate provisions must be made to ensure that the control of private broadcasting does not fall in the hands of companies having major

stake in the print medium or vice-versa. Cross-media ownership restrictions must, therefore, be considered.

(Para 6.4.1.9)

9.10 Direct or indirect foreign equity participation in companies entering the field of private broadcasting should not be permitted.

(Para 6.4.1.10)

9.11 Access on the private channel should be available to the common man through appropriate provisions in the law.

(Para 6.4.1.11)

9.12 In view of the Supreme Court's Judgement on airwaves, an independent authority must be set up to control and regulate the use of airwaves. The Sub-Committee felt that the integrity of the Indian Skies is as important as her territorial integrity. This regulatory authority must be set up through a law enacted by the Parliament at the earliest. This Body can combine the functions of the regulatory body mentioned in para 6.4.1.2 or can be a separate body exclusively for controlling the sky waves under the regulatory body mentioned in para 6.4.1.2.

(Para 6.5.1)

9.13 The apex regulatory body should be an independent autonomous public authority representative of all sections and interests in the society and should control and regulate the use of air waves in the interests of the public and to prevent invasion of their rights.

(Para 6.5.2)

9.14 The foreign satellite channels must also be brought within the ambit of the said regulatory body in order to make them amenable to the Indian laws.

(Para 6.5.3)

9.15 The Sub-Committee felt that in the case of skywaves, efforts should be made to develop an international convention to forge multilateral/regional agreements with countries especially in regard to software.

(Para 6.5.4)

9.16 The Sub-Committee noted that it will be difficult to pre-censor programmes aired on television in view of vast structure such a step would call for. By bringing in the private broadcasting foreign channels within the purview of the Indian legal system much of the evil that exists can be curbed.

(Para 6.5.5)

9.17 The Sub-Committee felt that the present programming in electronic media especially television needs to be more decentralised to meet the regional/local aspirations. In this connection the

Verghese Committee recommendations regarding decentralised programming, programme autonomy and constitution of five zones for this purpose (viz. South, West, central Eastern and North) should be considered by the Government.

(Para 6.5.6)

9.18 Care should be taken that no monopoly is developed by the private broadcasters, by restructuring the number of channels, especially 'several interest' channels owned by them.

(Para 6.5.7)

9.19 The Sub-Committee agrees with the broad objectives of national film policy set out by the Working Group on National Film Policy, vide para 7.6.2 above and we reiterate the same. As a formal declaration of the national film policy would be useful, the Sub-Committee recommends that the Government should formalise the same as early as possible.

(Para 7.12.1.1)

9.20 Since the Estimates Committee and the Standing Committee have examined in detail the working of the CBFC as mentioned above, we have nothing further to add except to reiterate their recommendations. These recommendations are discussed elsewhere (vide Annexure-VII and paras 7.9.5 and 7.9.6). The Sub-Committee wishes to add that Government should amend the guidelines for certification of films to curb the distortion of image of eminent leaders in films.

(Para 7.12.1.2)

9.21 The production of good shortfilms, both by Films Division and independent producers, needs to be actively encouraged. The Films Division should make efforts to improve the quality of its documentaries and make them more interesting. The Sub-Committee recommends that Government should encourage the growth of Indian documentary film movement. The Sub-Committee suggests in this regard that the Films Division should farm out more and more films to independent producers on its panel. Further Doordarshan should commission production of documentaries through the Films Division and other agencies.

(Para 7.12.1.3)

9.22 It has been stated that it would be very difficult to find sponsors for telecasting documentaries on Doordarshan. The Sub-Committee recommends that the Doordarshan should allot time-slots for at least half-an-hour every day on prime time for documentaries, even if there are no sponsors.

(Para 7.12.1.4)

9.23 The Sub-Committee also recommends that the feasibility of showing documentary films in

various educational institutions, schools, colleges and universities should be examined. The Ministry of Human Resource Development should consider the allocation of funds for the purpose.

(Para 7.12.1.5)

9.24 With a view to encourage children's films the Sub-Committee recommends that more infrastructural facilities should be developed for production of animation films

(Para 7.12.1.6)

9.25 The Sub-Committee also recommends that more avenues for exhibition of children's films in each district of the country should be identified.

(Para 7.12.1.7)

9.26 During meetings, representatives of the film industry pointed out that though Government called for recommendations from the Film Federation of India for the Dadasaheb Phalke Award, it did not normally accept their recommendation. The Sub-Committee is informed that Government gets recommendations from all quarters including film industry and the best person is selected at the highest level in the Ministry for the Award. To give more credibility to the Government's decision, the Sub-Committee would recommend that a small Committee consisting of eminent persons including those from Film World should be appointed by Government to consider all names received and recommend the name of the person who should be honoured with the Dadasaheb Phalke Award

(Para 7.12.1.8)

9.27 The National Film Awards were instituted in 1953 to provide for a special impetus to regional cinema and to encourage the production of films of aesthetic excellence and social relevance. The Sub-Committee also recommends that the award winning films should be screened at various State capitals and other large towns that the people in the regional centres may get an opportunity to see them. The Central Government should provide funds to the State Government to organise such festivals of award-winning films

(Para 7.12.1.9)

9.28 A number of witnesses before the Sub-Committee represented for the full implementation of the recommendations of the High Powered Committee (1990). The Sub-Committee would suggest that the matter should be taken up with the various State Governments/Union Territory Administrations again

(Para 7.12.1.10)

9.29 The Sub-Committee recommends that the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations

should be persuaded to rationalise the rates of Entertainment Tax to help the film industry

(Para 7.12.1.11)

9.30 During discussions some of the film industry representatives to the Sub-Committee that in view of high cost of imported raw stock, the customs countervailing duty may be reduced if not abolished. The Sub-Committee recommends that the countervailing duty on raw stock may be abolished in view of the fact that there are no facilities to manufacture the raw stock in the country

(Para 7.12.1.12)

9.31 Some of the witnesses before the Sub-Committee expressed concern about the shortage of theatres as well as the closure of cinema houses due to the advent of television and video. To overcome the shortage of exhibition facilities the Sub-Committee suggests that wherever cinema theatres are being converted into commercial complexes, the local authorities should ensure that in the complex coming up at the site at least one mini theatre is provided in the complex. The Sub-Committee would also recommend that more multiplex theatrical complexes should be encouraged

(Para 7.12.1.13)

9.32 The Sub-Committee recommends that the National Film Development Corporation and other agencies should encourage construction of theatres with 400 to 500 capacity instead of very large theatres

(Para 7.12.1.14)

9.33 During meetings the representatives of the cine workers pleaded for the declaration of the film industry as an "Industry" so that the workers of the industry are not exploited by the producers. The Sub-Committee feels that introduction of labour welfare measures to film industry workers will go a long way in improving their conditions. The Sub-Committee therefore, recommends that the film industry may be declared as an industry not only for the purpose of institutional finance but also for application of labour legislation relating to welfare of labour

(Para 7.12.1.15)

9.34 The National Film Archive of India is charged with the responsibility of preservation of cinema. There have been press reports about the damage and loss of important films. The Sub-Committee suggests that the Archive should take immediate steps to acquire all film classics and preserve them properly for posterity

(Para 7.12.1.16)

9.35 The Sub-Committee also suggests that the National Film Archive of India should take over the

old documentaries from the Films Division for restoration and preservation.

(Para 7.12.1.17)

9.36 Nowadays film appreciation courses have been started in various universities and new film societies are coming up. However, Government gives only Rs. 3 Lakhs per year to the Federation of Film Societies of India for its activities. This is awfully inadequate. The Sub-Committee recommends that Government should encourage film society movement by giving all facilities including finance. The grant-in-aid to the Federation of Film Societies of India should be augmented suitably

(Para 7.12.1.18)

9.37 Some of the witnesses informed the Sub-Committee that Akashvani's royalty rates for film songs which broadcast is Rs. 2 per song and was fixed a long time ago, considering the time lapse and increase in the cost of picturising film songs, the Sub-Committee recommends that this should be suitably revised upwards by Akashvani

(Para 7.12.1.19)

9.38 With respect to the suggestions regarding evolving a code of conduct for the journalists and for vesting the Press Council of India with more powers, the Sub-Committee felt that the matter may be left to the Press Council for suitable decisions. However, the Press Council should consider arming itself with adequate powers to deal with habitual offences with respect to communalism, threats to national security and other undesirable activities

(Para 8.4.1.1)

9.39 The language Press and the small and medium newspapers should continue to grow. Therefore, the Sub-Committee recommends that the Government must endeavour to create a suitable environment by helping in the modernisation of these sections of the Press.

(Para 8.4.1.2)

9.40 Though the financial viability of a newspaper depends to a larger extent on the advertisement revenue which it is able to attract, Government's advertising policy and rate structure should be rational and uniform evolved with a view to eliminate the possible use of advertisements as a lever to influence the press and thereby affecting its freedom.

(Para 8.4.1.3)

9.41 Even though the import of newsprint has been put under OGL, there is a need for a nodal agency to import newsprint on behalf of small and medium newspapers as they do not have the necessary infrastructure and the bargaining power for such imports

(Para 8.4.1.4)

9.42 The training requirements of the journalists is yet another aspect which needs immediate attention. The press over the years has to become increasingly professional in nature. With a view to ensure that the press as a whole is capable of reporting and explaining and interpreting in their proper perspective various developments taking place. It is imperative that additional facilities are created to enable journalists to have a broad educational preparation and specific training in journalism.

(Para 8.4.1.5)

9.43 Indian news agencies have not been able to operate effectively in the sphere of dissemination of national news abroad, and the gathering of foreign news for dissemination within the country. Foreign news agencies still dominate international news sections in leading newspapers. It should be the endeavour of the Government to permit and strengthen the news agencies to become self-sufficient in these spheres. In this connection, renewed efforts should be made in revitalising the efforts taken in the wake of Non-Aligned Conference, 1976 which lead to the establishment of Newspool for exchange of news among the third world countries.

(Para 8.4.1.6)

9.44 To strengthen the Indian news agencies, the Sub-Committee recommends that corporatisation of these news agencies with adequate equity base, as was suggested by the First Press Commission, should be seriously considered

(Para 8.4.1.7)

9.45 Freedom of the editors, and editorial contents, insulated from the business and other interests of the owners, should be ensured through a proper institutional mechanism or guidelines to be evolved by the Press themselves or by the Press Council of India. The issue of diversion of funds from the newspaper industry to other industries may be examined

(Para 8.4.1.8)

9.46 The Sub-Committee feels that towards professionalisation of the print media, adequate institutional finance should be made available to the journalists, etc through cooperatives on easy terms

(Para 8.4.1.9)

[Translation]

Appointments of SCs/STs

213. SHRI SUKDEO PASWAN Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state

(a) whether appointments of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are made in accordance with the quota fixed for them in Ministries/Undertakings and institutions; and