

CHAPTER-I

REPORT

This Report of the Standing Committee on Information Technology deals with the action taken by Government on the Recommendations/Observations of the Committee contained in its Twenty-Third Report (Thirteenth Lok Sabha) on “Demands for Grants (2001-02)” pertaining to Ministry of Information & Broadcasting.

2. The Twenty-Third Report was presented to Lok Sabha on 17 April, 2001 and laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha on 18 April, 2001. It contained 29 Recommendations/Observations.

3. Action Taken Notes in respect of all the Recommendations /Observations contained in the Report have been received and categorised as under:

(i) Recommendations/Observations which have been accepted by the Government:-

Paragraph Nos:- 37, 38, 41, 45, 46, 49, 88, 89, 94, 95, 100.

Total : 11

Chapter – II

(ii) Recommendations/Observations which the Committee does not desire to pursue in view of the reply of the Government:-

Paragraph Nos:- 42, 44, 47, 48, 86, 90, 91, 92, 98, 99.

Total : 10

Chapter – III

(iii) Recommendations/Observations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and which require reiteration:

Paragraph Nos:- 40, 93, 96

Total : 3

Chapter - IV

(iv) Recommendations/Observations in respect of which replies are of interim nature:-

Paragraph Nos:- 39, 43, 50, 87, 97

Total : 5

Chapter - V

4. The Committee trusts that utmost importance would be given to the implementation of the recommendations accepted by the Government. In cases, where it is not possible for the Ministry to implement the recommendations in letter and spirit for any reason, the matter should be reported to the Committee with reasons for non-implementation. The Committee further desires that Action Taken Notes on the Recommendations/Observations contained in Chapter-I and final Action Taken Notes on Chapter-V of this Report should be furnished to it at an early date.

5. The Committee will now deal with action taken by Government on some of its recommendations.

Decline in the production of in-house programmes

(Paragraph No. 40)

6. In the earlier Report Committee had expressed concern at declining trend in in-house production of programmes. It had pointed out that 30 percent to 35 percent of programmes for DD channels were being procured from outside producers in the form of commissioned programmes. Even news and current affairs programmes were produced by outside producers. The Committee had pointed out that in spite of huge infrastructural facilities and staff at its disposal, Prasar Bharati could produce low volume of in-house programmes. Further, very few in-house programmes were telecast on DD particularly at national channel. For this reason, infrastructure and manpower remained under-utilised. The Committee had desired that infrastructure, artists and other staff should be put to optimum use and in-house production of programmes should be commensurate with the available resources. The bottlenecks in this regard should be identified and removed.

7. In the Action Taken Note, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting has stated that there had been an increased emphasis on the need for higher revenue generation which was possible only from more sponsored programmes. The addition of new

channels, their conversion into 24 hour channels and opening up of studios had necessitated allocation of work to the available programme staff to man those stations and to run the channels. It has been further stated that for running the channels round the clock, programmes were procured from outside sources. Further, Prasar Bharati has taken steps to reactivate its in house production by providing incentives. It is also stated to have entered into negotiations with various Government departments to run their campaigns and programmes through Doordarshan and All India Radio. This campaign would be entirely based on in-house productions. Prasar Bharati expects that these steps would help reinvigorate infrastructural facilities and personnel.

8. The Committee is not impressed by the steps taken by the Prasar Bharati to optimally utilise the infrastructural facilities and personnel by redeployment of the staff. This would result in thinning of personnel but the infrastructure like studios would not be optimally utilised. Technical staff no doubt, can help start new channels or existing channels for longer hours, yet the studios and other infrastructural facilities will remain under-utilised because of thinning of staff. The best option, in the Committee's view is to increase in-house production and telecast them on important channels. With state of the art facilities available at Prasar Bharati studios, their production should in no way be inferior to outside productions if theme and creativity are of public interest. The tendency to prefer outside production at the cost of in-house production need to be curbed. Negotiations with other Government Departments to run their campaigns and programmes though a welcome step should not be the sole objective of Prasar Bharati.

Delay in formulation of special package for North-East

(Paragraph No. 48)

9. The Committee in its earlier Report had expressed serious concern at the delay in formulation of special package for North-East and desired that the same be expedited.

10. The Ministry in its Action Taken Note has stated that a draft Cabinet note for expansion of AIR and DD coverage in N-E region has been circulated to the nodal agencies for soliciting their comments and will be placed before the competent authority for consideration.

11. The Committee hopes that the problems relating to shortage of staff, inadequate studio facilities and other problems in the functioning of DDK, Kohima will be given utmost consideration after soliciting comments from the nodal agencies. The Committee trusts that views of the nodal agencies will be ascertained expeditiously and placed

before the competent authority for early consideration as the matter requires urgent action.

Use of official Electronic Media by a Minister

(Paragraph No. 50)

12. The Committee in its 23rd Report had taken serious note of the fact that the official electronic media was used by a Minister for his personal explanation to the nation about his resignation from the Council of Ministers in the context of “exposure” made by “Tehalka.com”.

13. The Ministry in its Action Taken Note has stated that Prasar Bharati has intimated that specific guidelines to deal with such situations are being formulated by them.

14. The Committee desires that specific guidelines be formulated expeditiously in order to curb the tendency to use official electronic media for personal purposes which is not warranted by public interest by those in authority. The Committee would also like to be apprised of the detailed guidelines formulated in this regard.

Recommendation of Geetakrishnan Committee Report

(Paragraph No. 93)

15. The Committee in its Twenty-Third Report had observed that the Geetakrishnan Committee had recommended handing over the activities of the Directorate of Film Festival to the Private film industry. However, nowhere such activities are attended to by private institutions, specially because film industry is individualistic in nature.

16. The Ministry in its Action Taken Note has not given any comments.

17. The Committee appreciates that it will not be possible for the Ministry to comment on the recommendation since Government has yet to formulate a view on the recommendations of the Geetakrishnan Committee. However, the Committee trust that its views will be considered by the Government when it examines that Committee’s report.

Directorate of Field Publicity

(Paragraph No. 96)

18. The Committee in its Twenty-Third Report had observed that projectors, vehicles and other machinery of Directorate of Field Publicity meant for field publicity through films in rural and remote areas often remained out of order depriving rural areas of the services of the

Directorate of Field Publicity. The Committee had strongly recommended that the Ministry should take urgent corrective measures in this regard and should maintain its infrastructure in good condition.

19. The Ministry in its Action Taken Notes has stated that on an average generally, 5 percent of the vehicles and generators and 7 percent of video projectors remained out of order at a given point of time in the Directorate. Further, the Ministry has stated that as and when breakdown of vehicles/electronic audio visual equipment/other machinery belonging to the Field Publicity Units of Directorate of Field Publicity occurs, the Regional Offices took immediate steps to rectify the defects at the earliest so that the publicity work does not suffer.

20. The Committee is not satisfied with the reply of the Ministry that the regional offices took action to rectify the defects in, projectors, motor vehicles and other machinery. The fact that 5 percent of the vehicles and 7 percent of the video projectors remained out of order at a given point of time points to a very unsatisfactory situation in regard to maintenance. Urgent steps should be devised to keep the infrastructure in good working conditions so that there is no disruption in the operation of the field publicity units. The frequent break down of vehicles/electronic audio visual equipment can be due to the old and obsolete machines or lack of proper maintenance. The Committee, therefore, recommends that the old and obsolete equipment which are difficult to maintain should be replaced at the earliest.