

Title: Regarding situation arising out of recent decision of the All India Radio to discontinue services from Delhi in five regional languages and steps taken by the Government in regard thereto.

**12.04 hrs.**

**CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL (DIBRUGARH): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Information and Broadcasting to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:

"The situation arising out of recent decision of the All India Radio to discontinue services from Delhi in five regional languages and steps taken by the Government in regard thereto."

\*THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): Sir, Prasar Bharati has informed that it has been decided to shift some of the regional language news units along with the staff from Delhi to concerned regional stations of All India Radio. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: What is happening in this House? How can everybody speak at the same time?

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : AIR broadcasts two types of news bulletins in the regional languages. These bulletins are compiled and edited in New Delhi by the General News Room. They are heard by the listeners mainly in the State where their regional language is mainly spoken. These bulletins convey the national news and some amount of international and business news. There are 17 such languages.

\* Also placed in Library See No. LT 2075/05

Now, I come to the State level regional language bulletins. These are compiled by the Regional News Unit of All India Radio situated in State Capital, but in a few larger States, there is more than one such RNU. These bulletins focus on State level development news and other major national and international events.

Both bulletins are to cater to those speaking in the regional languages of various States. There is no difference in the broadcast coverage of these two types of bulletins. However, Sindhi is a regional language, which is not the official language of any State. Only national language bulletins are being broadcast in this language.

At present, 17 national level regional language bulletins are being prepared, edited, translated and read out from Delhi. Various problems have arisen, such as:

Lack of sufficient regional language news editors, for supervision of translation, having appropriate knowledge and regional language skills. This affects the quality of news presentation adversely.

Large portion of work of translation is being done by the casual workers due to shortage of permanent employees, which has caused problems of diction, accent, etc.

It was felt that shifting of the Regional language News Units dealing with national level bulletins to the State Capitals will overcome these operational difficulties. In each of the State Capitals, Regional News Unit has trained News Editors, who are also fluent in the regional language, unlike Delhi. In addition, the News Readers/News Readers-cum-Translators available in the State Capitals are also universally admitted to be of higher standard both in voice quality, language knowledge and diction than those in Delhi.

National level bulletins will continue to be based on the approved Master script prepared by the General News Room at New Delhi and the listeners will also receive the same mix of national and international news as before, but the accent and quality of translation will be better. Exactly the same number of regional stations of All India Radio will broadcast the news bulletins. There will be no impact on listeners in the National Capital because of the change.

Three units have been shifted as follows:

Telugu to Hyderabad w.e.f. 1.4.2005

Kannada to Bangalore/Dharwad w.e.f. 27.4.2005

This issue was also discussed, Sir, in the meeting of the Members of Parliament of the Consultative Committee to this Ministry and followed up by a meeting of all the MPs concerned, with me being in the Chair. It is not that any decision was taken there. We only discussed it, because concerns were voiced by Members of the Consultative Committee as well.

This decision to shift the bulletins will not go against the role of All India Radio to integrate the whole nation. With this decision, the editorial guidelines for retention of national character of the language bulletins can be provided from Delhi by using on-line communication.

SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL : Whatever the hon. Minister has spoken, I think it is totally against the interest of the country. It is because All-India Radio has played a very significant role in the country, specially, in integrating the whole nation. Through its fast and varied network, it has brought together people in different areas speaking different languages. It has a unifying and binding role in the country.

This is not a step in the right direction and would immensely go against national integration. This would also hurt the sentiments of the large number people in respective States, particularly, Assam and North-East. We are far from the National Capital. If we are attached to the National Capital it is through language. Language is a very very sensitive issue. Now, they want to de-link Assamese language from National Capital. It will go against the interest of the national integration process. So, we cannot support this stand. It is because at the time of taking this stand particularly, the hon. Minister would have thought, for the cause of the country, the ethos of the freedom struggle. We want to stay together. India must stay together. National Capital must create room for everybody's accommodation. The sense of accommodation must be made strong. Hon. Minister in the House is saying 'lack of sufficient regional language news editors'. What do you mean by this 'sufficient'? You have no intention to recruit resourceful person to fill up the gap. You are saying 'this affects the quality of news presentation adversely'. It is because if you do not have the resourceful persons, of course, it will affect...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Come to the question, please. He has mentioned only three units.

SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL : Sir, I am coming to it. The news broadcast from All-India Radio, Delhi is different in content and depth from the news broadcast by the regional centre. It is because it covers the national and international issues. As you have been saying that the news matter can be faxed from the Delhi regional centres, I would like to refer a matter related to Hyderabad and how it is affecting the entire procedure. After shifting Telugu unit to the Hyderabad, it is learnt that the contents and news are being faxed from Delhi to Hyderabad. Here casuals are being employed in addition to the already available regular staff to translate and broadcast the news. This has complicated the existing well-settled procedure that was followed prior to shifting. Neither this resulted in improving the quality, nor in any administrative convenience as claimed by the administration. Now, I do not want to prolong my debate. I want to simply ask my question. As you know, Assam and North-East are going through a very troubled time. We do not want to alienate that part of the country from the National Capital.

MR. SPEAKER: What is your question?

SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL : I would like to request the hon. Minister that after considering all these developments, would the hon. Minister re-examine the whole thing and continue the language news bulletin from New Delhi? That I want to know from him.

MR. SPEAKER: Just a minute, Mr. Minister. Although there are no other notices given in time, I will call some of the hon. Members.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : Okay, Sir. I have no objection.

MR. SPEAKER: Even if you had, I would have overruled it. It is difficult to overrule you! I have a long list and I cannot call all. Let me start with Shri Mohan Singh.

**श्री मोहन सिंह (देवरिया) :** अध्यक्ष महोदय, दिल्ली भारत की राजधानी है और हम ऐसा मानते हैं कि भारत की सभी भाषाओं और सभी राज्यों का समावेश दिल्ली के जरिये है। श्री एस. जयपाल रेड्डी साहब जैसे विद्वान और सक्षम मंत्री के रहते हुए यह बहाना बनाना कि क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं के बुलेटिन राजधानी से केवल इसलिए जारी नहीं किए जा रहे हैं कि यहां उनकी जो गुणवत्ता होनी चाहिए, जो उनके उद्घोषक हैं, उनका उन भाषाओं का जो उच्चारण है, उसके बारे में उनकी जो समझ है, वह उचित नहीं है। मैं ऐसा समझता हूं कि इस तरह की बात करना रेड्डी साहब जैसे योग्य मंत्री के लिए उचित नहीं है।

अध्यक्ष महोदय, हम भारत की पहचान दिल्ली को समझते हैं और हिन्दुस्तान के सभी राज्यों के लोग भारत की राजधानी होने के नाते दिल्ली शहर में रहते हैं। उन लोगों को जब देश की राजधानी दिल्ली में उनकी क्षेत्रीय भाषा में, उनके राज्य की भाषा में खबरें नहीं मिलती हैं, तो उनमें असंतोष पैदा होता है और उन्हें ऐसा लगता है

कि वे भारत के नहीं, बल्कि एक सीमित राज्य और प्रदेश के हैं जहाँ की भाषा वे बोलना जानते हैं। इसलिए हम समझते हैं कि भारत के वृहत्तर स्वरूप को ध्यान में रखते हुए, राष्ट्र की एकता और अखंडता को ध्यान में रखते हुए, इन सभी क्षेत्रीय भाषाओं में, भारत की राजधानी से, उसके सेंटर से प्रसारण होना चाहिए। मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि मंत्री जी इस बारे में क्या कार्रवाई कर रहे हैं ?

SHRI KIRIP CHALIHA (GUWAHATI): Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is a very sensitive matter. So, I would definitely urge upon the Minister not to be guided by inexplicable reasons and considerations that are extraneous. More importantly I would like to urge upon the Minister not to be misled by the officers of Prasar Bharati who are trying to sacrifice the broader concept and the need of national unity. They are sacrificing national unity due to financial and technical considerations.

Sir, I thank all the hon. Members who have raised this matter. I think their sentiments have to be understood that the Delhi Station of All India Radio has been an institution and it has become almost a centre for national heritage. Under no circumstance we should allow the segregation to take place and give an impression that India has now become decentralised centres and there is no need for these institutions like All India Radio which represents the nation as a whole.

MR. SPEAKER: Dr. Babu Rao Mediyam.

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH (ULUBERIA): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I also want to ask a question on this.

MR. SPEAKER: Telugu language is affected. Telugu language news bulletin has been shifted. That is why I have called him.

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH : Sir, I have been the architect for this issue to be raised.

DR. BABU RAO MEDIYAM (BHADRACHALAM): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to raise two questions.

Telugu, Kannada and Sindhi language news bulletin units have been shifted to their respective State capitals. I feel Telugu is the third largest spoken language in India. Both for me and the Minister it is our Mother tongue. Moreover, Telugu is known as 'Italian of the East'. As the Minister said, I feel there is a dilution in the spirit of national integration because in the process of translating, compiling and gathering news, the original words and the regional spirit of that language will be diluted.

MR. SPEAKER: What is your question?

DR. BABU RAO MEDIYAM : My question is, this whole issue is erupting from the lack of manpower in the Delhi Radio Station because for so many years there is a ban on recruitment of News Readers. So, due to less number of News Readers in Delhi, the persons who know more languages other than their own Mother tongue are overburdened with work relating to other languages which they know. As a result, the persons working in various language news units are being reduced day-by-day.

Therefore, I would like to know whether the Minister will consider to lift the ban on recruitment and recruit more number of people into these regional language news units of Delhi Radio Station so that we can prolong this process of broadcasting regional language news bulletins from Delhi.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay. You have made your point. Shri Ramdas Athawale.

SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA (RAMPUR): Mr. Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I want to associate myself with the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member.

MR. SPEAKER: Not now. If I call you, then you can do so.

SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU (SRIKAKULAM): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I also associate myself with the feelings expressed by Dr. Babu Rao Mediyam.

MR. SPEAKER: You can associate, but you cannot make a speech. Nobody bothered to give notice on this matter. Only one hon. Member gave notice and I have given him opportunity. But now I have got a long list of names of hon. Members who want to ask questions. I cannot call all of them.

SHRIMATI JAYAPRADA : Sir, I am also from Andhra Pradesh, but my *karma bhoomi* is Uttar Pradesh.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes; you associate with this both for Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU : Sir, I am also associating with this.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes; you associate. This is an exception. The language question is a very sensitive issue and that is why I am making some exception.

Shri Ramdas Athawale, if your intervention is relevant, please ask a question.

**श्री रामदास आठवले (पंढरपुर)** : जी हां, रिलेवेंट है, सर। 50 से भी ज्यादा साल हो रहे हैं, हमारी 17 इंडियन लैंग्वेज हैं। इनका बुलेटिन ऑल इंडिया रेडियो, दिल्ली से निकलता है और इस न्यूज़ को इंडिया में रहने वाले मराठी भाषी लोग भी सुनते हैं। **â€** (व्यवधान)

**अध्यक्ष महोदय** : आप सिर्फ प्रश्न पूछिए।

**श्री रामदास आठवले** : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मेरा माननीय मंत्री जी से इतना ही स्वाल है कि दिल्ली से जो इंडियन लैंग्वेज का बुलेटिन चल रहा है, यह चालू रहना चाहिए। अगर आपको इस लैंग्वेज के लोग नहीं मिलते तो हम देने के लिए तैयार हैं। मतलब, आपको जिस लैंग्वेज के लोग चाहिए, वे हम देने को तैयार हैं। इसलिए आप इस बुलेटिन को बंद मत करिए, यह दिल्ली से चालू रहना चाहिए, इसके लिए आप क्या करने वाले हैं?

MR. SPEAKER: As an exception, since he seems to be the Minister's choice, I am calling Shri Hannan Mollah. But this is not to be treated as a precedent in future.

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH : Thank you, Sir and it will not be treated as a precedent.

Sir, this is the third attempt to shift the regional language news units. First it was attempted during the tenure of Shrimati Sushma Swaraj. At that time I protested and checked it. For the second time, it was attempted during the tenure of Shri Arun Jaitley. Again I protested and checked it.

MR. SPEAKER: Very good.

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH : Now this is the third time when my attention was drawn to this issue. We had a long discussion with the Minister and he is also very sympathetic towards this matter. On this matter, there is correct diagnosis of the illness, but wrong treatment is being given. For typhoid, you cannot give the treatment of diabetes or diarrhoea.

There are two problems. One is, in the regional language news read out from Delhi, sometimes the language is not correct because the News Readers are staying in Delhi for a long time and they forget their own language. That problem is there.

Secondly, there is the problem of editing. To overcome that, the Government has to recruit new people. Instead of that, they are winding the units. So, there is correct diagnosis of the illness, but wrong treatment is being given. I submitted to the Minister that this is a national question, linguistic question, national integration is related to that and so bureaucratic understanding will not help.

The point is, 61 employees are working here. They are old. I would like to know whether their service will be in trouble or new recruitment will be done. I would like to know from the Leader of the House whether the Central Government will relax the ban at least in the case of All India Radio in the interest of national integration.

MR. SPEAKER: We have got a most sensitive Minister. I am sure he will look into it.

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH : I hope this will be taken care of.

**श्री शैलेन्द्र कुमार (चायल)** : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मैंने भी इस बारे में बोलने के लिए नोटिस दिया है। **â€** (व्यवधान)

**अध्यक्ष महोदय** : नोटिस तो सभी ने दिया है।

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: About 15 hon. Members have given notice.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Shailendra Kumar, I am sorry. I am very accommodative to you. Nothing will go on record now.

(Interruptions)\* **â€**

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Minister, please do not answer him.

\* Not Recorded.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: No, I will not allow indiscipline in the House.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : Mr. Speaker, Sir, first of all, as the hon. Members have rightly observed, All India Radio has historically played a highly integrative role and I would like to state here, with all the emphasis at my command, that All India Radio would continue to play that integrative role.

Secondly, I appreciate the need to see that the position of various languages in India is not only preserved but also promoted. Ours is a country which is not only known for religious diversity but also for linguistic diversity.

Therefore, I am alive to the language sensitivity. The concerns expressed by the hon. Members are well taken, I am afraid, they are not well placed.

What used to happen in the days before the current satellite technology came into play was that these news broadcasts used to read from Delhi. But they were being heard only in those respective States. Because the broadcasts were being translated, read from Delhi, it does not mean that they were being heard all over the country. With this change...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Please do not interrupt.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: I will listen to them at the end of the day. I am keeping my mind open. But I want them to note the facts.

SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU : Let them continue...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: No interruptions please.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: I do not yield my palm to none including Shri Yerrannaidu and Shrimati Jayaprada, who is an MP from Uttar Pradesh in my love for Telugu language. But having said that, please remember whether on account of reading, either from Delhi or from the concerned State capital, the coverage of broadcast will not be altered even by .001 per cent.

The problem is, the master copy is prepared in Delhi, either in English or in Hindi. It is translated and read from Delhi. There is no editorial staff to check the quality of translation, to check the quality of pronunciation, to check the quality of diction and to check the quality of delivery. These are practical problems. We have been receiving complaints from people, who are listeners about the quality.

What is happening is that the master copy, which is prepared in Delhi, will get passed on to the State capitals for instant translation and reading from there, though it is read from there. It is not said that it is read from Hyderabad. It is a national broadcast. It contains national contents. It contains international news. It contains business news. Therefore, I do not see that the quality is affected. I have not yet taken a final view because I am still engaged in the process of consultations with the Members of the Consultative Committee. We have had extensive meetings. At the end of the day, I will go by your view. But I do not want to you to fall a prey to this canard that somehow the place of language is being denigrated. It is not true and nobody will be retrenched.

The only people who are affected by this are the people who, as casual news readers, are employed time and again from New Delhi. The people who translate the master copy into Telugu and read that are not as good as their counter-parts in Hyderabad. When the coverage of broadcast is not affected, why should we all be so disturbed over the place from where this reading is done?

Therefore, my appeal to all the hon. Members is that they should not get disturbed. There is no need to get disturbed. However, our mind is open. The Prasar Bharati, in its Board meeting in 2000, took this decision. All the steps are since followed. But I would like to assure everybody that this is not going to affect our national integration at all. I must tell you that the bonds of our national integration are much too strong for such things.

MR. SPEAKER: Now, we come to 'matters of urgent public importance'. Shri Ramji Lal Suman.