

LOK SABHA DEBATES

LOK SABHA

Friday, April 6, 1990 /Chaitra 16, 1912
(Saka)

The Lok Sabha met at Eleven of the Clock

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Mr. M.V. Chandrashekara Murthy.

DR. THAMBI DURAI : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to make one submission. Whenever our former Members die, we make obituary references.

MR. SPEAKER : I know that. Please sit down.

MR. SPEAKER : Now, Mr. Ramlal Rahi.

[Translation]

Today also, people are not present.

[English]

- Next question - Shri Bhosale..

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[English]

Interim Board for Doordarshan

*353 SHRI PRATAPRAO B. BHOSALE: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Govt. propose to set up an Interim Board to look after Doordarshan;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the criteria to be adopted for selection of members of the Board;

(d) whether any representation in the Interim Board will be given to persons, from public life; and

(e) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. UPENDRA): (a) to (e). Government proposes to set up an Interim Media Advisory Committee, consisting of distinguished persons from the media, from the world of cinema, art and culture, the world of scholarship, agriculture and rural development, to oversee the functioning of AIR and Doordarshan.

[Translation]

SHRI PRATAPRAO BABURAO BHOSALE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government had earlier announced that these media would be given autonomy. I would like to know from the hon. Minister how much time will it take to give them autonomy ? The hon. Minister has not made any reference to it in his reply. The second point is that, I had asked in my question whether the Government proposes to set up an Interim Board to look after Doordarshan. In this regard, it has been stated in the answer that the Chairman of the Interim Media Advisory Committee would be there in this Board. I would like to know what would be the powers of this Board, what would be its term and what would be the number of its members.

[English]

SHRI P. UPENDRA : Sir, while introducing the Prasar Bharati Bill in this House on 29th December, 1989, I had indicated that the Bill would be passed this year, and more so, during this session and after that, we would take six to seven months to complete the legal and administrative formalities and the new Corporation would come into being early next year. That was the schedule we had already announced.

According to the Bill, there will be a Board of Governors which will be selected by a selection committee consisting of the Vice-President of India, the Chairman of the Press Council and a media expert to be appointed by the President of India. The Board of Governors will be selected by this three-members committee. Pending the formation of the Corporation, I had mentioned in my speech while introducing the Bill:

“ To ensure that right from now all this is done through a process which is routed in the concept of autonomy and independence even before the law is enacted, we propose to immediately set up a compact five-member board consisting of distinguished persons from the media, from the world of cinema, art and culture, the world of scholars, agriculture and rural development to oversee the functioning of AIR and Door-darhsan.”

The idea of formation of this interim monitoring committee is to prepare the media for the autonomous working next year. It is purely an advisory committee and the persons of this committee are being finalised now. In the next few days, we will announce the Media monitoring committee - purely advisory committee- not a replacement of the proposed Board of Governors.

[Translation]

SHRI PRATAPRAO BABURAO BHOSALE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the answer given by the hon. Minister is all right, but I

would like to know as to who would be the Chairman of this Committee?

AN HON. MEMBER : You would be the Chairman.

SHRI PRATAPRAO BABURAO BHOSLE: Many many congratulations. Will this Advisory committee have the powers only to advise on the enactment of a law for granting autonomy to the electronic media or will it have other powers also?

[English]

SHRI P. UPENDRA : We are considering a number of names of eminent people and I will announce the names of the members of that committee in this House. One of those members will act as the Chairman. As I said earlier, it will be purely an advisory committee. As regards the other part of the question put by the hon. Member, I can say that this is purely an advisory committee and they will not hold any statutory functions.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : The hon. Minister just now quoted from his speech He said that before the formation of the Board, there will an ad-hoc committee. I would like to know as to whether or not one is aware of a news which is appearing in a national Press for the last seven days. The present Minister is more of an interfering type than the recent Minister, Mr. K.K. Tewary. Sir, I just want to share the news which has appeared in a newspaper. I have all respect for you. I do not want to cast aspersions on you or on the Minister. When the President of India addressed this august House and the Rajya 'Sabha together, an hon. Member stood up and said something which we ourselves have also seen. At that time, a live telecast was arranged. It came out in the Press that the Minister called the camera man of the TV group in his chamber and instructed him not to show the interruptions either in the TV news or project the same in the live telecast. It appeared in the paper. I may be wrong also. But I will be happy if it comes in record that what happened was wrong. The interruption was also

not seen in the TV during the live telecast. May I know whether this is a fact and if is not fact, then why has he not contradicted? These are aspersions on the Ministry.

MR. SPEAKER : The Speaker, and the Speaker's Secretariat has nothing to do with that.

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV : Sir, I agree with you. But what is his Secretariat doing? They should contradict it. I agree that you cannot do it. Seeing you for the last three months. I agree that you cannot do it. Will you clarify the matter?

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE : We feel that you are doing it for the last forty years.

SHRI P. UPENDRA : I particularly do not relish the comparison which the hon. Member has made with one of the recent Ministers. But I can tell one thing that right now, Doordarshan and Radio are still Government organisations. They are not autonomous as on today. Myself or my Ministry cannot abdicate our responsibility about proper functioning of these media. As far as interference is concerned, the persons working there came to me and told how hotline telephones were kept there, how instructions were going on from the Prime Minister's Office and the Minister's Office how news were tailored and so on. Thus, they lost their power of functioning independently and today this has become the biggest handicap for me... (*Interruptions*) .. Therefore, we have given them functional freedom as on today. But I retain the authority to oversee their functions and point out lapses, if any. It is my duty and I will continue to do it. As regards Joint Session, I made it very clear in the Rajya Sabha also about the rules of Joint Session. Joint Session is meant only for the Address of the President of India and the camera is supposed to focus only on the President and no other proceedings were to be covered. No other proceedings were televised on that day. This is all I said on that day in the Rajya Sabha. It would continue to be the position unless we decide to televise the proceedings of the House. The hon. Mem-

bers' interruptions, etc. cannot be covered in the Joint Session.

SHRIMATI MALINI BHATTACHARYA : When this Bill was introduced, there was a very welcome promise on the part of the Government that a national consensus arising out of the debates and discussions on this Bill in different phases will be taken into account and the opinion of the people would be considered in the final shaping of this Bill. Today, there is a lot of debate going on at every level regarding the Prasar Bharti Bill. One would think that when we are about to have a temporary Advisory Board, this is a good time for considering the public opinion and having a feedback from the public opinion. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether they are thinking of any mechanism attached to this Advisory Board whereby public opinion and the popular opinion can be considered and accommodated.

SHRI P. UPENDRA : After the introduction of the Bill and at the time of the introduction also, I had mentioned that the Bill is tentative and this is subject to amendments. Accordingly, we opened a public debate. The Doordarshan and the All India Radio as also the media have conducted a number of panel discussions. Apart from that, I myself had written personal letters to about 1200 organisations in the country inviting their suggestions and we have received suggestions from the various organizations. There was a thorough discussion in the Consultative Committee attached to my Ministry on the Bill. I am also convening a meeting of the State Information Ministers on the 18th of this month for a discussion on this Bill and to elicit the opinion of the State Governments. We had already written to them and we would formally discuss it now. We have received a number of suggestions and there is a very good feedback. A separate cell has been opened in My Ministry. All the suggestions have been computerised clause-wise and they are being sorted out. Subsequently, when the Committee is appointed, we would ask them also to go through the suggestions and we will accordingly bring the necessary amendments.

[*Translation*]

SHRI VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether there would be any scope for improvement in the Doordarshan, with the mere formation of the Board? Now, crores of people watch Doordarshan. As far as the equipment available and the people working in Doordarshan are concerned, there is neither a complete professional outlook there, nor are there all the necessary equipments. Therefore, there can be no scope for improvement, with the mere formation of Board. Doordarshan programmes should reflect the hopes and expectations of the people. We have not seen any improvement during the last one hundred days. I would like to know from the Hon. Minister what steps are being taken to bring equipment and infuse professionalism in order to bring about specific reforms in the working of Doordarshan and whether he believes that the formation of Board would bring about the needed improvement? In the matter of sports, you must have seen that programmes are shown but they are interrupted in the nick of time. What steps are being taken by Doordarshan in this regard?

SHRI P. UPENDRA : Mr. Speaker, it is not that the mere formation of the Board would bring about the improvements but the Board would endeavour to bring about the improvement. As the hon. Member has said, we are initiating several schemes in the 8th Five Year Plan for soft ware, hard ware and further improvements

SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV: Independent Finance ?

SHRI P. UPENDRA : The Finance Minister is present in the House and it would be included in the 8th Five Year Plan.

[*English*]

DR. THAMBI DURAI: Just now, the Minister said that he would announced the names of the persons who were going to be in the Advisory Board for looking after the

Doordarshan. I would like to know whether the Minister would include some of the Members of Parliament as representatives in the Board.

SHRI P. UPENDRA: The Members had an opportunity when the Bill was introduced and we had a discussion in the Consultative Committee also. They will have an opportunity when the Bill is taken up for consideration and passing in the House. I do not think, we should include them in the Advisory Board.

SHRI SAMARENDRA KUNDU: I would like to know from the Minister whether he is going to encourage small feature films for telecast in Doordarshan.

During the last regime, one film, 'Voices of Baliapal' was not allowed to be serialised on T.V. Now, this film got an international award and has received a prize of more than Rs. 2 lakh. I would very specifically like to know from the Hon. Minister whether he will show this film on T.V. or not.

SHRI P. UPENDRA : Sir, is the supplementary within the scope of the main question?

MR. SPEAKER: It does not come within the scope of the main question but if you want, you can give answer.

SHRI P. UPENDRA: Sir, generally we are encouraging such films and that film also will be screened.

Foreign Purchasers of Indian Tea

* 354. **SHRI KAILASH MEGHWAL:** Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether major foreign purchasers of tea quote directly in the Indian Tea auction taking advantage of competitive Indian prices and cheap India labour;

(b) whether the tea so purchased against rupee payments is re-exported to hard cur-