

RAJYA SABHA

Friday, the 13th November, 1987/22
Kartika 1909 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the
Clock, Mr. Chairman in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Second Channel for Calcutta Doordarshan

*101. SHRI CHITTA BASU:†
SHRIMATI KANAK
MUKHERJEE:

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

(a) whether the Second Channel for Calcutta Doordarshan has since been opened;

(b) if not, what are the reasons therefor; and

(c) what are the specific objections to the handing over of the Second Channel to the State Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI AJIT PANJA): (a) and (b) To meet the local requirements of the metropolitan city, it has been decided to commission Second Channel service from Calcutta on November 19, 1987.

(c) The operation and maintenance of broadcasting network in the country is a responsibility assigned under the Constitution to the Central Government. The Government is firmly of the view that the provision was so incorporated by the framers of the Constitution in their wisdom.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: Sir, it is true that the Constitution of the country has assigned the responsibility

ty to the Centre. But I think, Sir, you would agree with me, the House would agree with me, that the Constitution does not confer the right to misuse the media for partisan ends, to vilify the Opposition, to project an individual in a Brazen manner and to misinform the citizens. Sir, I know the Constitution holds this position in this regard. But may I know also from the hon. Minister whether he is aware of the fact that certain agencies are operating radios in certain parts of the country for the last few months. Was it permissible under the Constitution of the country? If those private agencies, apart from the Government of India, apart from the State Governments, could run that kind of media, what is the objection of having the State Governments being allowed to run a separate media for the information of the people for various reasons, for cultural, for linguistic, for educational or for developmental work. In this context, lastly, I want to know whether there have been widespread allegations about the misuse of media for partisan interests. Would the Government reconsider its decision for setting up an autonomous corporate body for the management of the AIR or Doordarshan as has been recommended by the Chanda Committee?

SHRI AJIT PANJA So far as the first portion is concerned, I deny that there has been any misuse or vilifying of the Opposition. Sir, the hon. Member drew our attention to certain agencies operating private radios. The Government has no knowledge of the same; nor has any information come. If the hon. Member supplies with information about any particular place where private people are doing so, we have got the infrastructure to take action. As for the autonomous corporation the answer is 'no' at this stage. Sir it remains with the highest body, that is, this Parliament, it is

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Chitta Basu.

under the control of Parliament. I am answerable to Members from all parts of the country who represent the people, 85 crores of people. If there is any misuse, I am answerable for the same.

SHRI CHITTA BASU: In his reply the Minister says that the Second Channel service from Calcutta will commence from 19th of this month and that too to meet the requirements of the metropolitan city and not for all. May I know what are the reasons for limiting it for the metropolitan city and not opening it for all? Is it due to the inefficiency of the administration? Or is it due to the inadequacy of the staff? I am told that for the Second Channel twelve Film Editors are needed at present. At present Calcutta Station has got only two. The number of other staff like sound recordist, cameraman, etc. is also inadequate. Therefore, what are the reasons for limiting the second channel to meet the requirements of only the metropolitan area and not of all other areas?

SHRI AJIT PANJA: There is no question of limiting it. As you know, the policy is to start in three phases; first, primary; second, national network and third, local. This is meant for the local metropolitan area. When it was first started in Delhi, it was with 1 kw transmitter covering only 25 kms of Delhi Administration and that is still going on. The second one in 1985 was in Bombay, that also covering only 25 kms from the place where the Bombay transmitter starts. These are meant for the local, that is, the metropolitan area. In Calcutta when there is improvement of science and technology taking place, we are trying to set up, we are going to set up a 10 kw one which will cover a radius of about 100 kms. The reason is in cosmopolitan cities like Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and Madras there are people who belong to not one regional language and one regional culture; there are people belonging to various languages and various cultures of India. Therefore, while

keeping the emphasis on the local culture of that metropolis, the tastes and aspirations of people coming to that metropolis from other parts of the country have also to be fulfilled. So, it is not correct to say there is inadequacy of staff or it is because of alleged inefficiency of the people there. There is no question of limiting it.

SHRIMATI KANAK MUKHERJEE:

It is the long standing demand of the people of many States, not only of the Left Front Governments of West Bengal and Tripura but of many other State Governments, that the second channel of Doordarshan be handed over to the States because ours is a country of unity in diversity and, therefore, the social, economic and cultural facets and peculiarities of each region must be given scope to develop naturally. That is why we need a second channel in the hands of the States, for the development of regional culture. But the desire of the Central Government for centralisation of power and the partisan attitude of the ruling party is continuously hampering the growth of national integration and national unity. At the Chief Ministers' Conference held in April 1987 the Chief Ministers—not only the Chief Minister of the Left Front Government of West Bengal but others also—had passed the following resolution—and if it was against the spirit of the Constitution they would not have adopted this resolution—

“In the sphere of public mass media and communication there are reasons to be disturbed by the way the decisions on Programmes in radio and television have also been unjustifiably centralised and misused. It is strongly demanded that one station of radio and one channel of TV be reserved for the State Governments.”

Will the Union Government, therefore take into consideration the needs of the people, the public opinion, the demand of the States, and revise its

decision on handing over the second channel to the States? Secondly, does not the Central Government think that if the State Government is given the powerful media of a second channel of Doordarshan, it will be able to fruitfully project its development programmes also, its training schemes, schemes on education, culture, agriculture, industry, etc. according to the needs of the regional people? And lastly, is it not essential that for strengthening the national unity every State must have its own media like a second channel on Doordarshan so that they may have scope for full play in their distinct identity and regional characteristics?

SHRI AJIT PANJA: The whole object of a powerful media like TV and radio, as the honourable Member has herself admitted, is to build up a citizenry who will be adoptable anywhere, in any part of India. Sir, the question of revision of the decision with regard to the power and authority which will be exercised by the Centre so far as the TV is concerned does not arise. Secondly, it is a total misconception that if it is handed to the States there will be justice. In Parliament, Sir, all the Members are taking part. In fact, Mr. Chitta Basu himself took part and several other Members also have taken part and I have found from the records that as many as 15 Members took part in a four-hour discussion on this particular subject in this very House on the 28th April. But the point is this: For building up such a citizenry, that is, citizenry of India, it must remain in the hands of Parliament, that is, under the control of Parliament, that is, the Central Government. So far as handing over to the State Government of West Bengal is concerned, it does not arise at all... (*Interruptions*)... That does not arise. Sir, there is a newspaper called "Basumati" and that has been taken over by the State Government. Ever since it has been taken over, till today, you do not find a word being used about any culture except the

leftist culture... (*Interruptions*)... There is another journal called "Paschmi Bengal". Since the Left Front Government came to power in West Bengal, you won't find the name of a single person in this journal who belongs to the Congress (I) Party except the results of an election where the Congress (I) has been defeated... (*Interruptions*). Under these circumstances, Sir, so far as the State of West Bengal is concerned, so far as the present Government is concerned, they are ill equipped to take over this powerful media which is meant for all the people, for the people all over India.

SHRIMATI KANAK MUKHERJEE: The Central Government is partisan and that is why they think that the other Governments are also partisan... (*Interruptions*).

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes, Mr. Ghulam Rasool Matto.

SHRIMATI RENUKA CHAUDHURY: They are partisan... (*Interruptions*)... This is what they are doing.

SHRI GHULAM RASOOL MATTO: Sir, my question relates to the expenditure on the second channel of Doordarshan. Would the honourable Minister be pleased to tell me what expenditure he is going to incur on the second channel? That is question (a). Now, I come to question (b) What is the population that is to be covered by the second channel? (c) Which are the next cities for which he proposes to have the second channel? I come to the last question, question (d), which is very important. If he does not want to give it to the States, then for what purpose is he having the second channel?

SHRIMATI RENUKA CHAUDHURY: So that he can give the winning results of the Congress (I)!... (*Interruptions*).

SHRI AJIT PANJA: Sir, in one supplementary he has put four questions, that is, (a), (b), (c), and (d). In reply to question (a), Sir, I would like to say that the amount

of expenditure would be, for the Calcutta second channel, a little over Rs. 10 crores. Part (b) of the question: The population covered is 2,38,00,000, approximately. Part (c): Area covered is about 100 kms. from the station and so far as the next city is concerned, it is Madras, hopefully, by the beginning of the next financial year. The question that was asked is about handing over to the State Governments. Even Mr. Basu improved on his question by asking whether it is going to be autonomous. About handing over the things to the State Governments I have already mentioned. Now, the whole idea is this: To a city like Calcutta or even Delhi, Sir, people from all over the country are coming. Now, this second channel is for the needs of those people who are from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala or from some other part of India. So, we are going to have, at the beginning a one-of-a-kind programme trying to cater to the needs of all the people coming over there, from all walks of life, people from different castes or languages or creeds or colour. They come there for making out a living and they come there for educational purposes and their needs may be catered to. But this will not disturb the 6-30 to 8-40 local, that is, the primary channel of Calcutta. Therefore, it is only for catering to the regional people. Here the local channel will be to cater to the needs of the cosmopolitan city with emphasis on the local people.

MR. CHAIRMAN. Yes, Prof. Lakshmanan.

PROF. C. LAKSHMANAN. At the outset, I would like to contest the view of the Minister that the Union Government alone prepares the citizenry in this country. I firmly believe that all State Governments are intending only to develop the citizenry in this country. Let there be no mistake about it. Having stated that, the founders of the Constitution thought of handing over the maintenance and the operation of second

channel. It is to be taken into account that they could not envisage all the possibilities, because today there is a great need for informal education to cover a large number of people under literacy. This has been the stand even of the Education Ministry. If that is the case, it will ultimately be the responsibility of state Governments to increase the pace of literacy. And in view of this also there is need for increasing the programmes through the electronic media, the Doordarshan. In view of that, second channel is needed for every State so that what has been the backlog in literacy rate in this country is wiped out. Therefore, instead of taking partisan view, may I ask the Minister to kindly consider the importance of second channel in each of the State so that very important programmes like literacy, etc. may be taken up? Therefore, only when this is done, Sir, there will be the possibility of developing the citizenry of a meaningful category. Therefore, even if we have to develop the citizenry, there is the need, urgent need, to have second channels so that State Governments will be able to have meaningful educational programmes for literacy.

SHRI AJIT PANJA: We are having meaningful educational programmes, particularly non-formal educational programmes, through our network. It is true that there is need to establish second channels in various parts of the country. But we have to go gradually. We cannot overlook the infrastructure already set up. The metropolitan cities' infrastructure is already there. We started with Delhi. In 1984 it was in Delhi. In 1985 it was in Bombay. In 1987 it is coming to Calcutta. Then in 1988-89, hopefully, in the beginning, it will go to Madras. But so far as education is concerned, we are getting programmes from the U.G.C. which caters to the needs from almost all regions. In every State also where there is programme generating facility there are

representatives of State Government, selected by them, so that they suggest and they do participate. All that is taken into consideration. So far it is going on well so far as the channel already in operation is concerned.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: My question relates to the allocation of time for regional languages in the second channel. Sir, in Delhi two-hour programme has been relayed in the second channel. For regional languages time has been allotted. In the Calcutta Doordarshan will the regional languages be given importance and what is the time allocated for the purpose of those living in the metropolitan city of Calcutta? And what is the capacity which we are going to have in Madras for the purpose of the second channel?

SHRI AJIT PANJA: Sir, as already answered, in Calcutta we are starting one-hour programme at the beginning. But our idea is to go up to two hour programme later on, as I have said, for people living in Calcutta, whether they are local inhabitants, that is, Bengali-speaking, Hindi-speaking, Tamil, Telugu or Malayalam, whichever language they are speaking, taking in view the proportional representation there, taking in view how many they are and what type of thing is necessary. Gradually it will develop. So far as Madras is concerned, the timing has not yet been settled. But I can say that it is being done according to population representation, the main idea being that the taste and aspirations of the local inhabitants, from whichever part of India they come, are satisfied, as far as possible.

श्री शरद यादव : मान्यवर, माननीय मंत्री जी द्वारा जो जवाब दिया गया है, मैं उसमें संतुष्ट नहीं हूँ। मैं उनसे कहना चाहता हूँ कि जिस तरह में आकाशवाणी के जो प्रोग्राम हैं और जो खबरें हैं, उनको लोगों ने कम देखना शुरू कर दिया है, बी०वी० सी० की खबरें ज्यादा सुनते हैं इस देश में और वह ज्यादा विश्वसनीय हो गई है।

अब दूरदर्शन को जो संकेद चैनल है, हिंदुस्तान में जो लोकशाही से चुनी हुई सरकारें हैं, उनके हाथ में बिल्कुल वक्त नहीं देना — मैं मानता हूँ कि संविधान ने यह हक दिया होगा किसी को कि केंद्र सरकार काम करेगी। लेकिन यह इनके हाथ में है कि जो लोकशाही से, लोकतंत्र से सरकारें चुनी हुई हैं, वह अपने जो आर्थिक कार्यक्रम हैं, सामाजिक कार्यक्रम हैं, शैक्षणिक कार्यक्रम हैं, उनको करने के लिए इन्होंने संकेद चैनल रिलीज किया है। उसके प्रोग्राम के लिए निश्चित है वक्त देने का काम शुरू करना चाहिए और यदि उसमें सफलता हासिल हो, तो बढ़ाने का काम करना चाहिए।

मैं पूछता चाहता हूँ कि मंत्री जी इस पर विचार करेंगे कि नहीं करेंगे ?

SHRI AJIT PANJA: It is not correct that the people of India listen to the B.B.C. and not to Akashvani. Our records show otherwise.

श्री शरद यादव : इनकी खबरों की विश्वसनीयता के कारण बी.बी.सी. को सुनने वालों की संख्या ज्यादा बढ़ गई है, मैंने यह कहा है।

SHRI AJIT PANJA: So far as the second channel programmes are concerned, we are gradually trying to improve them. I agree with the hon. Member that in Delhi and Bombay it has not yet become so popular as we expected it to be. That is why with the audience research inputs the experts are seeing how to gradually improve these programmes. So far as the main programmes of second channel are concerned, there are entertainment items like music, dance and regional language programmes, foreign serials, particularly English serials, Hindi programmes, cultural round-up programme of topical events, etc. Those the the main ideas by which it is guided. We are always open to good suggestions. It has to improve with the participation of the people, increasing educational level and also gradual exposure to the advancing world. Perspectives do change and accordingly we have to

change the format and make it suitable for the people so that it becomes best for them.

श्री सत्य प्रकाश मल्लवीय : मान्यवर, केन्द्र-राज्य के संबंध आपस में सुदृढ़ हो और अच्छे हों, इसके लिए एक नरकारी आयोग भी नियुक्त किया गया था और उस नरकारी आयोग की रिपोर्ट भी सरकार के पास प्रस्तुत कर दी गई है और उसके टर्म्स आफ रेफरेंस में यह विषय भी था।

मैं समझता हूँ कि उस पर विचार तो होगा ही, लेकिन मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि चूँकि जो हमारा संविधान बना था, उसमें बहुत से ऐसे प्रावधान थे, उसमें संशोधन किये गये हैं, उसमें कुछ अतिरिक्त चीजें बढ़ाई गयी हैं या परिवर्तन किया गया है और मंत्री जी ने जो उत्तर यह दिया है कि संविधान निर्माताओं ने चूँकि जो व्यवस्था की थी, उसके बदलने की सरकार आवश्यकता नहीं समझती है, इसी परिवेश में मैं जानना चाहता हूँ कि केन्द्र-राज्य संबंधों के अच्छे होने, सुदृढ़ होने के लिए यह भी आवश्यक है कि जो राज्य सरकारें अपनी सलाह दें, उसको भी केन्द्र सरकार को मानना चाहिए।

तो मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ कि कितने राज्य हैं हमारे देश के जिनकी सरकारों ने केन्द्र सरकार से इस बात का अनुरोध किया है कि उनके राज्यों में दूरदर्शन का दूसरा चैनल खोला जाए ?

SHRI AJIT PANJA: Sir, demands have been received from the Chief Ministers of Sikkim, Tripura, Assam and Andhra Pradesh etc. that there should be a second channel there and that the second channel should be handed over to the State. These are the demands received so far. So far as the Sarkaria Commission is concerned, the report has been submitted. It has not been communicated to us as to what their recommendations with regard to television and radios are.

श्री मोहम्मद खलील-उर-रहमान : मंत्रीजी मिनिस्टर साहब ने सप्लीमेंट्री सवाल का जवाब देते हुए यह कहा कि रीजनल प्रोग्राम के लिए 6.30 से 8.40

तक का टाइम अलॉट किया गया है। उस ताल्लुक से मेरा यह कहना है कि 6.30 से 8.40 अलॉट तो जो है पूरे वीक के सात डेज में रीजनल प्रोग्राम के लिए अलॉट किया गया है। इसमें से कुछ तो चित्रहार वर्ग के जो प्रोग्राम्स होते हैं, उसके लिए तारीखें तीन दिन चले जाते हैं और फिर दूसरी बात यह है कि जो भी रीजनल प्रोग्राम होता है, वह प्रोग्राम हमारी स्टेट की जो सर्गमिया है, उसकी पालिसीज उसके जो प्रोग्राम्स हैं, उसकी अक्कासी नहीं करता है।

दरअसल यह सेकेंड चैनल का जो मुतालबा किया जा रहा है, वह मुतालबा इसी वजह से किया जा रहा है कि स्टेट गवर्नमेंट्स की जो पालिसीज और प्रोग्राम्स हैं, उनको पेश किया जाए और खुद स्टेट गवर्नमेंट के हाथ में यह दिया जाए और प्रोग्राम आर्गनाइज करने वाले स्टेट गवर्नमेंट के लोग हों, इस ताल्लुक से मैं मिनिस्टर साहब से जानना चाहूंगा कि आपका इस ताल्लुक से क्या रिएक्शन है ?

SHRI AJIT PANJA: Sir, the reaction is negative. It will not be handed over to the State at this stage. I think, the hon. Member made a mistake between primary service, national network and local service. So far as primary service is concerned, in some programme generating centres it has come from 6 O'clock and somewhere it is 6.30, i.e. from 6 or 6.30 to 8.40. It depends on the local programmes only. Of course, it is not only the local people inhabiting or opening the television sets but there are also many other people who come from various vocations living in the city itself, and for them also it is necessary to cater and that is what we are doing.

SHRI PARVATHANENI UPENDRA: He has asked that even in the regional programmes, they are not projecting the achievements and the programmes of the State Governments. That point has not been covered.

SHRI AJIT PANJA: That is not correct, not in the regional programme. Where there is a primary service from 6.30 to 8.40, various local things are being given. And Mr P. Upendra, on the 20th of April 1987 had a time for 15 minutes only, being the opening speaker on the Calling Attention, but he argued for 50 minutes. And all these points were effectively answered by me at that time.

SHRI D. B. CHANDRE GOWDA: Sir I do not how the hon. Minister's attention escaped the demand of Karnataka for a second Channel while answering the question, he mentioned only four Chief Ministers. The earliest State to make a demand was Karnataka. Secondly, Sir, even the regular centres to be opened in different part of Karnataka are either being postponed for petty reasons or are not being considered. Recently in the case of Chickmagalore centre—of course, Sir, I need not stress as to what important role Chickmagalore played—the Authorities concerned announced the day for the opening for the Centre as the 1st of November, the day that the Rajyostav of the State has to be celebrated, and the nation and he people were waiting to watch the cricket being played in India. Thirdly, the Sahitya Sammelan was due to begin. And the date that was fixed on the 1st November was postponed for a petty reason that the Minister was not available to switch on the ceremony. May I know when does the hon. Minister find time to come to Chickmagalore and switch on the ceremony and give an opportunity for the people to at least have a darshan of Doordarshan?

SHRI AJIT PANJA : Sir, that is the difficulty in relying on rumours. There was no programme for me to go on that date to Chickmagalore nor anybody including the hon Member, invited me to go there. Sir, if there is to be a programme for Chickmagalore for opening, the time has to be fixed. We have to see that every thing is in order. Then we will certainly go

and do it. But one point I want to make before you. If is not true that any injustice has been done to the State of Karnataka. All the States, as far as possible, we are catering to. And if the hon. Member wants, I shall give the details as to what are the programmes of Karnataka..

MR. CHAIRMAN: He wants to know when you are going to Chickmagalore.

SHRI AJIT PANJA: As soon as the Member invites me I will go there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Vithalbhai Patel.

SHRI VITHALBHAI MOTIRAM PATEL: Mr. Chairman, Sir, a number of areas in the rural districts are yet to be covered by the television. When the people demand for rural areas, the Department says that they have no funds. Then what is the use of opening the second channel in metropolitan cities until you cover the areas fully.

SHRI AJIT PANJA: It is not correct to say that we are not covering the rural area. In fact each of the transmitter, even the smallest one, covers 25 KM radius. When it is being covered in Calcutta a 100 Km radius, a lot of rural areas will be immediately covered. The town does not consist of 100 kms radius. It is not correct. The station is made in an urban area, of course, but that is for purposes of the infrastructure, but we are going ahead to cover the rural areas also.

SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: Sir I would like to draw the attention of the Minister to the fact that when I spoke on the floor of this House on the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the then Minister had given an assurance on the floor of this House that Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra were ideally located for starting a second channel. Now, I want to know whether it is a fact that when the Government shuffles and reshuffles the portfolios of

Ministers, the priorities and parameters which they have for allocating new stations also change with them. Because I remember that the Minister holding the portfolio at that time had categorically stated that Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh were technically sound for starting a second channel. But suddenly now I find that the priorities have changed and Calcutta has come in in their place I have nothing against Calcutta getting a second channel. I wish the whole country gets a second channel. Regarding the available stations of doordarshan, repeatedly the other media have emphasised and people have said that nothing that ever happens on the national level is being informed to the country by Doordarshan. As you all are aware, recently the sati incident took place in Rajasthan. That was the time that we should have taken the opportunity and Raja Ram Mohan Roy's message should have been flashed and incidents of this kind should have been shown so that the people would have risen in revolt against sati and such other types of social evils. The whole nation was sluggish in reacting to the sati incident simply because we are not using the media at the optimum level. And this also goes for the Andhra Pradesh debacle when you were kind enough to come as Governor.

SHRI AJIT PANJA: All these suggestions are well noted.

SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: What suggestions?

SHRI AJIT PANJA: There was no question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: She raised a pointed question about the sati incident.

SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: I asked about the second channel for Andhra Pradesh.

SHRI AJIT PANJA: So far as the assurance of my predecessor is concerned, so far as I have been record, no such assurance is pending.

MR. CHAIRMAN: She also asked about sati.

SHRI AJIT PANJA: Regarding the sati incident, we have given the programme. But we cannot start a programme to enthuse the people in a particular action. Sir, the object of television is to see that the people's voice is carried. Whenever the people's voice was raised, we have carried it. There were several programmes denouncing sati in no uncertain terms. Probably the hon. Member missed it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have already taken half an hour. Let us go to the next question.

Death of Livestock in Gujarat

*102. SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that tens of thousands of cattle died at Abdasa and Lackhpatt in Gujarat because of the acute drought situation prevailing in the area; and

(b) if so, what steps Government have taken to save the livestock there by providing drinking water and fodder?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND COOPERATION IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI YOGENDRA MAKWANA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) The State Government have made arrangements for supply of fodder. Cattle camps have been organised and provision for drinking water has been made. Arrangements for supply of cattle feeds have also been made by the State Government.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Mr. Chairman, Sir, it is surprising to hear the Hon. Minister say that cattle have not died in Abdasa and Lackhpatt of Kutch district in Gujarat because of the acute drought situation