

[9 May, 2005]

RAJYA SABHA

SHRI P. R. KYNDIAH: I can only say that we do not have differences with anybody.

श्रीमती सरला माहेश्वरी: सर, मुझे प्रश्न पूछना था।

श्री सभापति: आप तो बोल लीं।

Regulator for Broadcasting

*622. SHRIMATI JAMANADEV BARUPAL:††

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

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

(a) whether Government have decided to introduce a legislation to facilitate entry of a regulator to monitor contents in broadcasting;

(b) if so, whether the regulator would be an autonomous, quasi-judicial body on the lines of the Federal Communications Commission;

(c) if so, whether Government also propose a liberal policy package for expanding FM radio in private sector to over 30 odd radio stations;

(d) if so, whether the new package would opt for a revenue sharing formula and lay greater emphasis on growth; and

(e) if so, be when a final decision would be taken?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) Yes Sir. Government is contemplating the establishment of an autonomous Authority to regulate content on television channels. The details are being worked out.

(c) and (d) More than 300 private FM radio stations across the country are envisaged to be set up in Phase II of private FM radio broadcasting. The policy for 2nd phase of private FM radio is under consideration.

(e) No time-frame can be indicated at present.

श्रीमती जमना देवी बारूपाल: आदरणीय सभापति महोदय, मुझे खुशी है कि कुछ उत्तर माननीय मंत्री जी ने इसमें दिया है। सूचना प्रसारण मंत्रालय ने प्राइवेट रेडियो चलाने के विषय में एक योजना दूसरे मंत्रालय को भेजी है, इससे रेडियो को बढ़ावा मिलेगा और 300 स्टेशनों को प्राइवेट सेक्टर में

††The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shrimati Jamna Devi Barupal.

लाने की योजना भी है। सभापति जी, अगले तीन-चार सालों में सरकार चार हजार कम्युनिटी रेडियो स्टेशन खोलने जा रही हैं। मैं यह जानना चाहती हूँ कि मंत्री जी इस बारे में आगे क्या करेंगे? क्या यह सच्चाई है कि सरकार एक रेग्युलेटेड सूचना और प्रसारण के बारे में काम कर रही है और इस विषय में कोई कानून बनाने की प्रक्रिया भी जारी है? अगर है, तो सरकार कब तक इसको करने जा रही है और नई फिल्मों को केबल चैनलों द्वारा दिखाया जाना क्या रोका जाएगा?

श्री सभापति: ठीक है, सारे क्वेश्चन्स एक साथ मत कीजिए, वे भूल जाएंगे।

श्रीमती जमना देवी बारूपाल: वे सबका जवाब एक साथ दे देंगे।

श्री सभापति: नहीं, वे भूल जाएंगे।

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: Sir, the hon. Member has put quite a few questions. As the Chairman has rightly observed, it shall now be my endeavour to answer each one of them.

First, coming to the question of expansion of 300 radio stations in the private sector, we have finalised the package and we are likely to come out with a bidding process in the next few weeks, if everything goes right. As for the community radio, thought it is not a part of the original question, I will be more happy to answer that. We are liberalising the procedures. The community radio scheme did not take off because the regime was very restrictive. We are working on that. As for the regulator, we believe that a regulator is required. We are working on the law. We hope to introduce it in Parliament as quickly as possible, though not in the current session.

श्रीमती जमना देवी बारूपाल: सभापति जी, दूसरे सप्लीमेंटरी के माध्यम से मैं यह जानना चाहूंगी कि केंद्रीय सूचना और प्रसारण मंत्रालय ने राज्यों के सूचना एवं प्रसारण मंत्रियों की एक बैठक बुलाई थी और फिल्मों को केबल चैनलों पर दिखाने के विषय में और मनोरंजन कर में कमी करने की मांग भी की थी। अगर ऐसा किया है, तो क्या बजट में और प्रावधान किया जाएगा?

श्री सभापति: आपने बहुत बढ़िया सवाल पूछा है।

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: Sir, as the hon. Member has rightly pointed out, we recently had a meeting of the State Information Ministers' in which a recommendation was adopted that Entertainment Tax all over the country should be reduced to 25-30 per cent. I am happy to report that this conclusion was reached unanimously. But steps are to be taken by the State Governments since the State Ministers were willingly privy to it. I am hopeful that this will be done within the next one year.

[9 May, 2005]

RAJYA SABHA

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Sir, I am happy that the Government is contemplating the establishment of an autonomous authority to regulate the contents of television programmes. I would like to know one thing in this connection. There are so many television programmes which act as an incitement to crime, violence, obscenity and so on. I feel the Minister's reply is very, very vague. He says that details are being worked out. I would like him to be more categorical. He is a dynamic Minister and I want a dynamic reply from him. When is he going to finalise it. At what stage is this? What details are being worked out? Please give me an elaborate reply.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: Sir, the Member is much more dynamic than the Minister. He was my college fellow for four years. He did not impart his dynamism to me.

Having said that, all the concerns expressed by him—harboured, but not expressed—are being taken on board. They will all be addressed to in the course of the formulation of the Bill. While the Bill is under preparation; it will naturally not be possible for me to refer to specific issues. You will kindly appreciate that.

DR. CHANDAN MITRA: Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister what the difficulty is in creating a new authority for monitoring television programmes. This has been discussed time and again. There was a talk of Media Council of India on lines of the Press Council of India, extending its jurisdiction from the print media to the electronic media. We have been hearing about it for several years now. The previous Government had also pledged something on it, but it did not happen. Here also, you said in the last session that some body would come into force. What exactly is the difficulty? Because today anybody who is being defamed by the television has no redressal, unlike the person in the Print Media where, at least, the person can approach the Press Council,. Where exactly is the difficulty in bringing about this legislation?

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : Sir, the hon. Member is one of the leading members of the media. He may kindly recollect that I had the privilege of introducing a Broadcast Authority Bill, when I was the Minister eight years ago, in Parliament. For some reasons, six years were wasted. I am sorry to say that. I don't derive any pleasure from casting reflections on others, but I am obliged to do so. Sir, we are trying to set up a regulatory authority on the lines of similar authorities that exist in almost all advanced countries,

like the Federal Communications Commission in the United States and like the OFCOM in Britain and like such other bodies in other parts of the world. Sir, we did try to see whether the Press Council could be transformed into Media Council, I also entertained this idea, but we believe a separate regulatory authority for television channels is better. That is what we are working on.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY : Sir, in reply to the question put by hon. Chandan Mitra, the hon. Minister replied that a regulatory mechanism will be set up by this Government, as far as the electronic media is concerned. Sir, now the worry is, the private channels, in their media war and competition are trying to malign the politicians, the bureaucrats and some of the people who are in public life. There is no remedy available to these people, except to go to court which takes several years. Sir, I would like to request the hon. Minister that in that Bill the necessary safeguards should be provided, without affecting the independence of print media and electronic media. The rights of people should not be infringed because the hon. Minister is propagating for the rights of individuals. So, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether that safeguard would be provided in the Bill or not.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : Sir, the hon. Member has referred to the classic conflict between individual rights and the liberty of the Press. In this debate on this conflict, I would like to err more on the side of the freedom of the Press than on the side of the rights of the individuals. I have been a parliamentarian in my own right, Sir, for 36 years either here or in the State Legislature, I don't think politicians have any special rights to be protected from any kind of defamation. Sir...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY : Sir...

MR. CHAIRMAN : Let the Minister complete the reply. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: We need your... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY : Sir, I may be permitted to say this. (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Let the Minister complete his reply. (*Interruptions*) You let him complete, first.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Sir, the; rights of the individual have to be protected. Sir, I also said in my question that freedom of Press should be

[9 May, 2005]

RAJYA SABHA

there, at the same time, rights of the individual should also be protected. Both these things should be safeguarded. The hon. Minister cannot ignore individual rights.

MR. CHAIRMAN : It is very difficult to ignore you. He can ignore your question, but not you.

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY : Sir, I have got high regards for Mr. Narayanasamy, and I have equally high regards for his views, and I agree with him. But, there is that conflict. If there is that conflict, Sir, that has to be regulated; it cannot be avoided. But, I would like to say that when we talk of defamation, we should have tarnation to go in for defamation. So, we, politicians, must try the acquire reputation of our own. That is the best shield. *(Interruptions).*

**623. [The questioners (Shri Lekhraj Bachani and Prof. R.B.S. Varma) were absent. For answer vide page 28].*

**624. [The questioners (Shrimati Ambika Soni and Shri Harish Rawat) were absent. For answer vide page 29].*

**625. [The questioners (Shri Kamal Akhtar) was absent. For answer vide page 30].*

Private colleges of Nagaland

*626. SHRI T. R. ZELIANG : Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that all private colleges of Nagaland are treated under the category of self-financing institutions and are not eligible for University Grants Commission Funds;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the details of assistance granted by UGC to private colleges during the Ninth and Tenth Five Year Plan in North-Eastern Region, State-wise and year-wise;

(d) whether UGC has received any representation from the Nagaland University or Nagaland Private Colleges Principals Association; and

(e) if so, UGC's response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ARJUN SINGH) (a) No, Sir. Four private colleges affiliated to Nagaland