

Parliamentary Committee hopes Prasar Bharati will plan better in 2016-17



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NEW DELHI: Noting that delay in Plan Expenditure has affected studio modernization, a Parliamentary Committee has expressed the hope that Prasar Bharati would resort to better planning during 2016-17 in execution of schemes for Doordarshan and All India Radio with available state of-the-art technology and gainfully utilize the allocated funds.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology which goes into I and B issues took note of the assurance of the pubcaster's chief executive officer Jawhar Sircar in this connection. Sircar told the Committee that the reason for under-utilization of Plan funds during 2015-16 as a policy decision was to avoid expenditure on obsolete technology such as analogue transmission, short wave and medium wave radio transmission etc.

Observing there had been delay in procurement of Camera Chains, XD Cam, Recorders and digitisation of transmitters, the Committee said less utilization of funds is likely to result in spill over of schemes to the next year.

The Committee noted that for the 12th Five Year Plan, the Government approved a total outlay of Rs 3,826 crore for Prasar Bharati – Rs 2,614.86 crore for Continuing Schemes and Rs 1,211.14 crore for New Schemes.

The outlay for Broad schemes namely ‘Broadcasting and Infrastructure Network Development’ was Rs 3,500 crore, for ‘Content Development and Dissemination’ Rs 186 crore and for ‘Special Project’ Rs 140 crore.

In addition, a separate outlay was being provided for ‘Kisan Channel’ – Rs 26 crore in 2014-15, Rs 45 crore in 2015-16 and Rs 60 crore for the year 2016-17.

For the Annual Plan 2016-17, the total outlay is Rs 450 crore which includes Rs 60 crore for the Kisan Channel and Rs 390 crore for Schemes ‘Broadcasting Infrastructure Network Development’ and ‘Special Projects’.

The Committee was told that there had been reduction in funds at the Revised Estimates stage as compared to the Broadcast Estimates given in 2015-16 for certain schemes as these were not expected to be executed by the Prasar Bharati during the remaining period of that financial year. These pertained to Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) transmitters, Direct to Home (DTH), Set Top Boxes (STBs), Digital Satellite News Gathering Vehicles (DSNGs) etc., in the case of DD. In the case of AIR, the requirement of funds was reduced, broadly because various schemes of AIR were reviewed in 2013-14 and 2014-15, and those found as having negative cost benefits were ordered to be ceased or tapered off.

The Committee noted that the Ministry had released Rs 453.77 crore to Prasar Bharati during the year 2015-16 and this amount was construed as expenditure by the ministry. However, Prasar Bharati said out of this, an amount of Rs 246.42 crore had been actually booked as expenditure by them which includes Rs 220.17 crore on Plan Capital in AIR and DD and Rs 26.25 crore for Content Development and Dissemination for DD Kisan.