

Binoy Viswam

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To
Shri Prakash Javadekar
Minister of Information and Broadcasting
Government of India

Date: 09.11.2020

Respected Shri Prakash Javadekar ji,

There has been a concerted effort by Prasar Bharti to close down government-financed means of information dispensation both at the regional and national level. First such action was taken in 2017, where 769 television channels were closed down. Now, radio stations are being targeted similarly. The Government claims that it is no longer economical to run these operations. It is of the opinion that these means are substitutable by the information dispensation through internet websites.

It is a privileged and misinformed opinion that everyone can access internet services efficiently at any time of the day. Access varies with respect to financial, social and geographical context and these barriers should not be ignored. This misinformed expectation will leave a large no. of people deprived of information and knowledge on regional affairs and cultures. When this issue was previously raised to I&B ministry the Prasar Bharti was directed to stop these inconsiderate actions. Now, they are using indirect means for cost-cutting. AIR Alleppey has been their latest target. They have had a technical problem in their transmitter due to which they are unable to continue their broadcasting services and have filed official requests to replace the transmitter. Prasar Bharti is using the excuse of unavailability of parts in denying the request and has ordered to decommission the AIR Alleppey transmitter. Employment of 21 technical staff employed there is under threat. Additionally, this sets up terrible precedence of denying assistance to regional centres and will be further used to shut down stations in smaller areas in future. Similar orders have been passed in Jalandhar and Gorakhpur and short wave transmitters have already been closed down at places like Aligarh and Panji. Spare parts of such transmitter are available with Bharat Electronics. The incremented cost is being used as an excuse to not buy these parts. Significance of Information and conversations should not be seen from an economical perspective as the qualitative benefits of getting access to such conversation goes far beyond any profit-cost scale.

I request your immediate intervention in the matter and urge you to direct Prasar Bharti to procure and supply the necessary parts to repair the transmitter at AIR Aleppey so that they can continue broadcasting their services.

Yours sincerely

Binoy Viswam

Leader of CPI Parliamentary Party &
Secretary, National Council



Adv. A. M. ARIFF

Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) Alappuzha, Kerala

Member: Standing Committee on Urban Development | Consultative Committee on Culture & Tourism

ALP/MP/390/2020

07.11.2020

Dear Prakash Javadekar Ji,

In continuation to our telephonic conversation this morning, I wish to bring to your kind attention, the urgent need for withdrawing the unilateral and arbitrary decision of the Director General of the Prasar Bharathi on 06.11.2020 to close down the 200 kW Alappuzha (Alleppey) Medium Wave Transmission Station with immediate effect. At the outset, let me register my strong protest in this short-sighted and anti-people decision having far-reaching consequences. As you may be aware, transmitter attached to the Thiruvananthapuram broadcasting station of Akashwani is of mere 20kW and its coverage is limited to only a small area. The 200 kW transmitter in Alappuzha is thus responsible for the transmission of signal to an extended area covering 93% of the territory of Kerala and far-away places like Lakshdweep, Kavarathi, Thirunelveli and Madura outside the State. The Alappuzha transmission station, which was established in 1971 with a capacity of 100 kW initially has become a part and parcel of the common man's daily life in Kerala. This transmitter is the sole media available for conveying messages to fishermen on voyages to Arabian Sea at the time of disasters and had come in handy during the unprecedented floods which devastated many parts of Kerala in 2018 with round the clock broadcasting of news and directions on rescue operations when mobile and internet-facilities were cutoff for days. It is also worthwhile to note that without this transmission station, the programmes of the central government including the popular 'Man Ki Bath' of the Hon'ble Prime Minister would not be reaching the people of Kerala. It is unfortunate that, when demands have been raised for different corners for upgrading the Alappuzha station to a broadcasting station, even the existing facility is being stopped abruptly.

In this backdrop, I request you to kindly intervene in the matter to immediately withdraw the decision of the Prasar Bharathi, as agreed during our telephonic conversation, in the larger public interest, failing which people will be forced to launch strong agitations to withdraw the decision.

Warm Regards,

Yours sincerely,

Adv. A M Ariff

Sri. Prakash Javadekar
Minister for Information and Broadcasting
Govt. of India
New Delhi