

respective states after sanction has been accorded to them.

DR. LAXMI NARAYAN PANDEYA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Hon Minister as has told that the three projects of Madhya Pradesh are pending due to financial constraints, I would like to know whether there is any proposal to provide financial aid to the State by the Central Government and if so, the amount and time by which it will be made available. Is it a fact that the Government has approved a Gas based power project at Bhandar (Madhya Pradesh) and if so, the latest position of this project?

SHRI KALPNATH RAI: Mr. speaker, Sir, some projects are entrusted to the Central sector and some to the State sector. Owing to financial constraints the Private Sector participation had to be allowed and pench Projects is under private sector. The second issue is regarding the Bhandar Gas projects which is still under consideration of the Government but it has not been accorded techno-economic clearance and Planning Commission has also not cleared it because of non-availability of fuel linkage.

SHRI ARVIND NETAM: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to know the quantum of shortage of electricity in Madhya Pradesh and about remaining three power projects. Apart from the project that has been given to the private sector. I would like to know the time by which funds will be provided to the remaining two projects. These two projects are the responsibility of State Government or Central Government or only Central Government and would you kindly tell us about the time by which funds will be provided for the completion of these projects.

SHRI KALPNATH RAI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, these two projects are under consideration of State Government and since the State Government has to finance the entire project, only they can throw some light on this subject.

[English]

Varadan Committee on Electronic Media

*42. **SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA:**
SHRI LAL K. ADVANI:

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

(a) whether the Vardan Committee on electronic media has submitted its report to the Government; and

(b) if so, the main recommendations of the Committee and the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (KUMARI GIRJA VYAS):

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The main recommendations of the Committee are given in the Statement attached. The Report is being examined by Government.

STATEMENT

Main Recommendations of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Introducing Competition in the Electronic media

The Committee acknowledges the need for introducing competition in the electronic media.

2. The Committee has listed out the various options available to the government for introducing competition, ranking them in the following order of priority:

- (a) Setting up of new TV/ Radio channels for regional broadcast may be allowed in the different parts of the country subject to viability of operations including suitable

linkage for inter-regional network.

- (b) Second channel of Doordarshan in the four metropolitan cities and additional radio channels including FM stations wherever available may also simultaneously be leased out to suitable licensees after passage of suitable legislation.

- (c) Permission may be given to one agency or consortium to set up a series of transmitters in the country (This option will rank only next to the option at (a) above).

- (d) Leasing out a particular time chunk from existing TV/Radio channels is not recommended.

- (e) Option of licensees leasing a transponder on a satellite is appropriate for developmental or educational telecast and may be considered by Government when spare segment on satellite becomes available.

3. Selection of agencies for grant of licence should be done by an independent agency which could be called Broadcasting Council and be comprised of eminent public men with unimpeachable probity.

4. Organisations eligible to receive licences should be public limited companies with major interest groups concerned with broadcasting represented in management and with open access to shareholding.

5. Cross Media restrictions to avoid

monopoly over information sources suggested.

6. Preference may be given to public bodies like Universities, cooperative institutions, etc. in the matter of grant of licence in their area of operation.

7. Guidelines for programmes spelt out. e.g. advertisements to conform to the advertisement code of AIR/Doordarshan, no programme to offend the religious sentiments of any group, be prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity of India, etc. or infringe the provisions of the Copyright Act.

8. System of quality rating and procedure for redressal of complaints suggested.

9. The Broadcasting Council of India be vested, through suitable legislation, with the functions of licensing, monitoring of programmes, quality rating and redressal of complaints.

10. New legislation to govern the setting up and operation of additional broadcast channels be enacted.

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am disappointed with the last sentence of the reply given by the Minister, viz. 'The Report is being examined by Government'. The House has expected a well-thought-out plan of action today and not an answer merely saying that the report is being examined. I say this because this is a matter in which time is the essence. Already, the media is under considerable assault from the skies, by the CNN, by the Star TV and through the Star TV, by the BBC. Unless we take immediate action, we will be at a very great disadvantage and Doordarshan will become totally irrelevant. The Doordarshan will become totally irrelevant.

My first question is, is the government determined to bring necessary legislation in this Session itself or are we going to repeat what we did about pirated video cassettes when we brought in legislation

three years late and as a result lakhs of pirated cassettes were available all over the country. My first question is about the timing of the Government plan of action.

KUMARIGIRIJA VYAS: Sir, I must admit that the legislation should not be brought in haste because this is not a simple issue. Regarding other question, is it possible for us to bring legislation in this Session itself, I wish to submit that things have changed now. Unfortunately or fortunately the CLN has come up. We are preparing for Prasar Bharati also. We believe that all the things should come with a reasonable thinking.

Sir, I should admit that this is the issue which pertains to everybody in this country. So, I may assure the House that we will sit with the leaders of all the parties before we come up with that legislation.

SHRILAL K. ADVANI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Committee was appointed because of the urgency of the matter. It was appointed specifically to see that this Government does not bolt the Cable doors only after the House has bolted it. But exactly it is going to do the same thing. Reply given by the Minister tells us very frankly that the Government is totally at a loss as to how to face this kind of situation. I am of the view that both on the one hand competition should be permitted and on the other hand regulatory measures also should be undertaken. This kind of total freedom that is given to this media is going to play havoc with our own social structure, social norms and social values. Therefore, Joshi Committee's recommendations, which were made in respect of softwares for TV also should not be regarded as irrelevant.

My corresponding question is what does the Government propose to do about the Prasar Bharati Act which also has been pending for nearly a year now. We passed it unanimously here in which Congress Party was also the party. So, I would like to know what does the Government propose to do about that and also about the Broadcasting Council.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): Sir, there has not been any inordinate delay on the part of the Government. It assumed power on 24th June. Immediately, what has happened to the Prasar Bharati Act was looked into. It was found that although the bill was passed by this House the notification was not issued by the previous Government. There was no political direction in respect of that but the departmental officers continued to on it. In the mean time certain other things like the Cable TV, public corporation, use of transponder by foreign television as rightly stated by the senior hon. Member came in.

So, on 3rd September, Vardan Committee was formed. This inter-ministerial eight members Committee submitted a report on 24th October, 1991. The department of Information and broadcasting after examining this Committee's Report sent it to the Prime Minister's Office on the 4th November, 1991. The Prime Minister's office has suggested that we must take up Prasar Bharati to CCPA. Regarding these four aspects-the prasar Bharati Cable TV, Public Corporation and use of transponder for foreign programmes - which have come in, we have prepared a compact note. There has not been a moment's delay. The Vardan Committee went around all over India. It talked with the persons who should their intentions or who wished to participate in public corporations. The experts who gave their thoughts or articles were also given a full hearing. We thought that we will be able to bring something in this Session. In fact eight Departments of the Government of India are involved for making it a compact package. I would assure this House that we are examining this matter. Honestly, I would say that we have done a lot of work within this period. We will also be consulting the Leaders of the Opposition and other Parties and thereafter we will come forward with a legislation in this regard.

PROF. K.V. THOMAS: Sir, the hon. Minister was in Kerala in connection with

the Children's Film Festival at Trivandrum. The Kerala Government and other organisations in Kerala have requested the hon. Minister to make available the Second Channel when it becomes operational for TV telecast in Kerala.

MR. SPEAKER: Does it come out of this question?

PROF. KV. THOMAS: No, Sir. The Varadan Committee had recommended that when the Second Channel becomes operational for the regional telecast, preference should be given to States which are far off.

SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA: Sir, a representation was made about the Second Channel. But, as the hon. Members of the House know that the conception of Second Channel was to cover only the metropolitan cities.

So far as Trivandrum is concerned, Local channel can be considered and through the Regional Channel, 70 per cent of Kerala has already been covered. It is not through Satellite but through Micro-Wave System.

Therefore, the question of Second Channel to Kerala is already within the policy laid down by the Government of India. Of course, if there is a local channel available, we shall certainly examine that.

Deaths in Delhi After Consuming 'Sura'

*43. **SHRI TARA CHAND KHAN-DELWAL:**
SHRI K.H. MUNIYAPPA:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of persons died and many were taken seriously ill in Delhi recently after consuming 'Sura' bottled by Karpoor Asav Pharmacy, Karnal;

(b) if so, the number thereof;

(c) whether the Government propose to give compensation to the next of the kin of the deceased and whether any action has been taken against the manufacturers of 'Sura';

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether any demand has been made for a judicial inquiry into the incident and if so, the reaction of the Government thereto; and

(f) the steps taken or proposed to be taken to avoid recurrence of such incidents?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (**SHRI M.M. JACOB**): (a) to (f). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

Reports were received that several persons have been admitted to a hospital in Delhi for treatment for unknown poison. Inquiries revealed that all of them had consumed an Ayurvedic medicine called 'Karpoor Asav'. Inquiries by Delhi Police showed that this drug was manufactured by a firm called Karnal Pharmacy which had its unit at Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh. The factory was sealed by Delhi Police on 7.11.91 with the assistance of the local Police and all its stocks seized. Immediately the Delhi Police impounded all bottles of 'Sura' in the market.

2. Samples of the suprious drug were analysed and found to contain methyl alcohol. Three of the proprietors of the firm have been arrested alongwith the main distributors and one of the proprietors is absconding. A case under sections 284/304 IPC has been registered against the manufacturers. 93 persons have been arrested so far in the extensive raids carried out in Delhi. 337 criminal cases have been registered.