

Sixteenth Loksabha

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Title: Need to set up the regulation of landing channel for linear broadcast.

SHRI BHARTRUHARI MAHTAB: It is relating to the landing channel for linear broadcast. The landing channel is an in-house channel and that is a slot available within their platform to the MSOs, LCOs and the DTH. The utility of this landing channel for the platform is that every time a viewer switches on the set top box, it automatically opens up on this channel. The purpose was to allow the MSO and LCO to use it either for its own service promotion or the promotion of the third party brand for a price. The landing channel has become a new revenue source. This may not appear to be a bad thing in isolation. But with only one landing channel slot per network resulted in scarcity means the broadcast industry is exposed to an unfair and anti-competitive practice. The industry needs to set right this new abuse as it is marginalising good content and those channels which do not entertain such practices need to be curbed. They need an industry self-regulation as it will vitiate competition. It is an unfair practice despite being legal.

This is specially happening on English channels. Some broadcasters are using the landing channel slot for as many operators to gain high viewership through high sampling and reach for their channel. This results in spike in the viewership data for the channel as viewers take time to shift from one landing channel to the other. This defeats the very purpose of digitisation. This is forcing viewers to forced viewing through landing channel which is against the basic thrust of digitisation. The regulator should curb these practices and, thereby, false viewership data. The regulator and the Ministry of I&B need to fix this issue. My demand is that there should not be any BARC watermark during such promotions on landing channels.

Lastly, allowing any other channel at linear platform should be declared illegal or else, a technology needs to be innovated to centralise channel's activity remains same at the linear platform across the distribution platform. I am happy that the Chairman of the Standing Committee of Information & Broadcasting is also taking up this issue. But I would expect the Government also to respond to this issue. This is creating a very illegal thing throughout the country and is affecting the viewership to a great extent. A large amount of money is also being siphoned off by a certain group of TV channels.

HON. SPEAKER:

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Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat are permitted to associate with the issue raised by Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab.