

14.59 hrs.

*(Interruptions)***PRASAR BHARATI (BROADCASTING CORPORATION OF INDIA) BILL- CONTD***[English]*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The House will now take up Legislative Business. *Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Bill.* Mr. Minister, do you want to make any statement?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. UPENDRA): Yes. Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, yesterday I moved that the *Prasar Bharati Bill* be taken up for consideration. As you are aware, the Bill was introduced in December last year in the very first Session of the new Parliament. In the election manifesto of the National Front, we made a commitment that one of the first acts of the National Front Government would be to free the electronic media from the control of the Government and create an autonomous Corporation for this purpose.

15.00 hrs.

The demand for autonomy arose and was strengthened because of the large scale misuse of this media in the past. *(Interruptions)*

SHRIMATI UMA GAJAPATHI RAJU (Visakhapatnam): We have not asked for the "Khula Manch". We had not misused the media. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI P. UPENDRA: The whole nation knows how the media was misused for the benefit of a particular individual family and the party in power.

15.01 hrs.

(DR. THAMBI DURAI in the Chair)
(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please.

SHRI P. UPENDRA: Therefore, the first task of the new Government is to restore the credibility of this media and we have taken certain steps towards that direction. The Bill had been introduced in December and a nation-wide debate was organised after that. Even while introducing the Bill, I said that the draft Bill or the Bill proposed was not the final one and we were open for discussion and amendment. And, in fact, I invited a nation-wide debate on this important Bill. And I am happy to say that almost all the organisations in the country showed extra-ordinary interest in the provisions of this Bill and discussions and seminars were organised all over. Even the official media organised panel discussions both in English and in Hindi at the National level and in the regional languages from the regional kendras. I myself addressed thousands of letters to various representative organisations in the country. And the universities, intellectuals, journalists and broadcasters, almost everybody, every section of the society participated in the debate. We received a large number of suggestions for improving the provisions of the Bill. These were computerised and considered in our Ministry on the basis of which some amendments were proposed in the Budget session. In fact, the Government was keen that the Bill should be passed in the Budget session itself and we tried for that. But a number of parties in the House including the main opposition wanted more time for the consideration of this Bill as well as for the amendments and they wanted us to put off the consideration to this session. Accordingly, the Bill has been brought forward again in this session for consideration. In the interregnum between the last session and this session, I again had discussions with the media experts, with various representatives of the political parties represented in the House and outside also. We again had a round of discussions on the amendments as well as on the main provisions of this Bill. In the last session, we did introduce two or three amendments which received some criticism from various quarters. As the hon.

[Sh. P. Upendra]

Members are aware, in Clause 22 of the Bill, a provision has been made that the Government will have an authority to issue directions to the Corporation, in the interest of the nation's security and maintenance of public order. We proposed one amendment as 22 (A) making it obligatory on the part of the Corporation to supply information to the Government for passing on to Parliament. As the hon. Members are aware, autonomy for the Corporation does not mean autonomy or freedom from the control of anybody. We only envisage freedom from the control of the Government. This Corporation as the Bill envisages, will be put under the overall control of Parliament of India, which represents the people of India. For that purpose, there may be questions in Parliament on the broad objectives and the functioning of the Corporation. Parliamentary Committees may take up certain aspects, not related to the day-to-day working and also there will be discussions each year on the basis of the annual report to be submitted by the Prasar Bharati Corporation and also the Broadcasting Council which will be the watch-dog of this Corporation. For all these purposes, Parliament needs some information which will have to be supplied by the Government, particularly the Information and Broadcasting Ministry which will be a nodal Ministry for this purpose. For that purpose, we made it obligatory on the part of the Corporation to supply such information, as the Parliament may require; that comes under amendment no.22(A). Legal experts felt that when you have made it obligatory on the part of the Corporation, under Clause 22 and 22 (A), to heed to the directives and to supply information, in case of persistent refusal—which I do not envisage immediately, but there is a likely chance—by the Corporation, either to heed to the directives or to supply information, there should be a remedial Clause also. Therefore, an amendment was suggested in the last Session, that the President, in such cases might supercede the Board of Governors and after giving due notice to the Corporation, asking for explanation. This particular amendment received some criticism from

the media experts, intellectuals and political parties also. After a series of discussions with all concerned, the Government thought it necessary to moderate it and we brought in a new amendment, for which we gave notice from the Government side. We only provided that in such cases—in the case of persistent refusal by the Corporation—the matter would be brought before the Parliament for whatever action it may deem necessary. In the last Session, we introduced another amendment as 22 (c), that is in case of national emergency under article 352—which can be declared only in case of war, after the amendment of the Constitution the Government will have power to take over the functions of the Corporation, in such cases. This has also received some criticism. In deference to the wishes of these experts and the political parties, we have dropped that amendment now, from the list of new amendments.

Previously, we thought of having a full-time Chairman. But again, after reconsideration, we thought that the part-time Chairman would be more suitable for the purpose. Therefore, we have brought in an amendment like that also.

Previously, there was a provision in the Bill, that the Broadcasting Council, which will be the watch-dog of this Corporation, will submit a report every year and that report will form part of the main report of the Prasar Bharati.

But one suggestion has come, that in such cases, the Broadcasting Council will become subsidiary to the Prasar Bharati, which should have its own independent existence. Therefore, it has been suggested that the Broadcasting Council will submit its own report independently and not as a part of the Prasar Bharati report. Therefore, that also has been brought as a amendment. These are broadly the new amendments which the Government has brought forward.

As I said earlier, we have meanwhile given some functional freedom to the media in regard to the news and current affairs. The

number of current affairs. Which was only two in the past, has been increased now to four for a week-two in Hindi and two in English. In addition, the Regional Kendras are also telecasting and broadcasting current affairs in the regional languages also.

We are giving ample opportunities to the private producers to present their programmes. I have got figures for two months—May and June. Out of 65 current affairs programmes telecast from the Doordarshan, 39 came from the private producers. Therefore, we are giving ample opportunities to the private producers also to present their programmes.

During the discussions and among the suggestions we received, there is one proposal that the Prasar Bharati should have financial autonomy also as the funding by the Government would undermine its autonomy and independence. I was able to convince the critics on this point because all Members know that even the constitutional bodies, like the Election Commission, the Judiciary, the Union Public Service Commission, the Comptroller and Auditor General, are funded by the State and that does not affect the independence of these organisations and the bodies. Therefore, there is no reason to suspect that simply because the State will fund the Prasar Bharati to the extent of its deficit, it is not going to undermine the independence and autonomy of the Corporation or, in any way, the Government will be able to influence this Corporation.

As regards the selection of the Board of Governors also, we have made a special provision in this. In regard to all the constitutional bodies, which I now mentioned, the President appoints these persons on the recommendations of the Government. In fact, they are the Government appointees. But in this very case of Prasar Bharati, we have made a provision that the Chairman and Members of the Board of Governors of the Prasar Bharati will be selected by a high-powered committee to be headed by the Vice-President of India, who is also Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. And it will consist of

the Chairman of the Press Council and an expert to be nominated by the President of India. This will be a very high-powered committee. In no other case, such a committee exists for the selection of the Board of Governors. Even in the BBC, which I visited in June-July, and made a study of it, all the Members of the Board of Governors are appointed by the Government. There is no such independent selection committee even in the case of the BBC. Therefore, we have gone a step ahead to ensure the objectivity and independence of this Corporation.

We firmly believe that the mere funding by the State will not affect the autonomy of the Corporation because the State has a responsibility towards the nation to provide information, education and entertainment and it is not a favour to be done to the Corporation if the State gives money which the Corporation needs. Therefore, there should be no doubt on this point also.

There are many other suggestions and amendments received from various parties. We will consult them. I will react to those amendments during the discussions and my reply. I do not want to take much time before the hon. Members express their views.

I gave a broad outline and the history of the Bill. The Bill is open for discussion. We will go by the suggestions received here. Some of the amendments are worth considering. We will also give thought to what amendments can be accepted. I am very keen that this Bill should be passed in the current session by this House and the other House.

There is a suggestion this Bill be referred to a Select Committee. A number of amendments have come. As I mentioned earlier, a nationwide debate has already taken place for more than 7-8 months and almost every section of the society reacted to this. I do not think that any further discussion is needed in this case. Hon. Members are present here. We will be discussing this Bill for 2-3 days. Any important suggestion from any side of the House will be received

[Sh. P. Upendra]

with due consideration. Therefore, I recommend that this Bill be passed in this Session. I particularly request Members opposite who seem to have second thoughts inspite of their clear assurance which they have given in their manifesto, to come around and support this Bill. With these words, I would request this House to consider and pass this Bill in this Session itself.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion moved:

"That the Bill to provide for the establishment of a Broadcasting Corporation of India, to be known as Prasar Bharati, to define its composition, functions and powers and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, be taken into consideration."

[Translation]

SHRI GIRDHARI LAL BHARGAVA (Jaipur): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill be circulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon by the 12th November, 1990." (1)

PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT (Ajmer): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill be circulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon by the 9th November, 1990." (19)

[English]

SHRI KUSUMA KRISHNA MURTHY (Amalapuram): Mr. Chairman Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill be circulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon by the 30th November, 1990." (114)

"That the Bill to provide for the establishment of a Broadcasting Corporation of India, to be known as Prasar

Bharati, to define its composition, functions and powers and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, be referred to a Select Committee consisting of 9 members, namely:-

- (1) Shri H.K.L. Bhagat
- (2) Smt. M. Chandrasekhar
- (3) Shri Jaswant Singh
- (4) Shri Purushottam Kaushik
- (5) Prof. P.J. Kurien
- (6) Shri Janardhana Poojary
- (7) Shri Mullappally Ramachandran
- (8) Shri Amar Roypradhan; and
- (9) Shri Kusuma Krishnamurthy

with instructions to report by the 30th November, 1990." (115)

SHRI ANANTRAO DESHMUKH (Washim): Sir, I beg to move:

"That the Bill be circulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon by the 26th November, 1990." (220)

SHRI VASANT SATHE (Wardha): At the very outset, I would like to say that it was unfortunate that the hon. Minister thought it fit to make some disparaging remarks while introducing the Bill about our party and its leaders. It is unfortunate because I thought that we are going to discuss this very important Bill on a higher plane and go into real depth of the Bill and its provisions irrespective of party considerations. This Bill is something which concerns all of us as elected representatives of the people. We owe it to the people and... (Interruptions) ... May I request particularly some of my friends not to interrupt? We know that we can give and take. At parties, level, we are very good. If

you interrupt, we will have to use hard words and we will be disrupting the whole discussion. Therefore, we know this game. So, kindly do not interrupt... (*Interruptions*)... Sir, through you, I request all my hon. colleagues not to interrupt. Sir, I believe that we have a duty to the people of this country as their elected representatives. What are the media available to the elected representatives to reach the people of this country? Parliament, parliamentary proceedings and the most important media today is the electronic media. Kindly consider this. We have no control over what is known as the print media. Print media has traditionally grown its own independence and represents the views as expressed according to what they think is the best. As elected representatives, we owe it and this has been spelt out in Section 12 of this Bill at length, to the people basically two things; first, to inform them not only of what is happening in the country and all over the world and two, to educate them.

AN HON. MEMBER: And to entertain also.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: One whole culture of India is what is known as audio-visual culture. "Drishyashravya sanskriti". A large number of our people for five thousand years or more may have been unlettered, but they have been educated in the larger sense of the word by seers, saints and savants throughout centuries by these audio-visual methods. This has made this possible. Go to any village today in the country, north, south or any part; a person may not know how to read or write, but if you pose a problem to him in Rajasthan, in U.P. or anywhere, you will find that that villager will immediately quote to you from Tulsī's Ramayan, or Kabir or Gurumanak's Gurubani and give you those pieces of wisdom which have been given to him. This was done by this audio-visual method.

In modern times indeed you have such a tremendous powerful medium available like Doordarshan and Radio. A stage is coming when just with a DRS, direct receiving set of the size of a small dish, we will be

able to receive satellite communications and TV transmissions of any country in the world. It is only one square foot antenna. Kindly see what are the possibilities. It is worth Rs. one thousand only. With this anyone having a television set in a rural or urban area will be able to switch on and receive, whether it is American or Russian broadcast or telecast or of any other country. See the possibilities that are emerging now.

With this possibility, do we, as people representatives as controlling the resources, the revenues given by the people, owe something to them or not? That is the first consideration. And if we do it, then my submission is, firstly, as far as the question of autonomy is concerned, let me make it very clear that there are no two opinions. I have seen and I will quote also. Presently, there are no differences about the question of giving autonomy to Doordarshan and Radio. We are all agreed on this. In their Manifesto, the National Front says—one of the first acts of the National Front will be to liberate the electronic media from the Governmental stronghold and convert them into autonomous Corporations. Convert them into Autonomous Corporations—Mark each word. Later on, the Bharatiya Janata Party in their manifesto said:

[*Translation*]

Prasar Bharati Bill, 1989 relating to electronic media will be revived in which provision has been made to constitute an autonomous corporation for Akashvani and Doordarshan.

[*English*]

Now, I will quote from the Congress manifesto:

"Radio and TV have to serve the purpose of informing the general public, specially millions of poor with little or no capacity to read and write the great events affecting the destiny of the nation and lives of our people. To this end, the electronic media will continue to be

[Sh. Vasant Sathe]

owned by the Government. However, with a view to ensuring functional autonomy, high professionalism and the right mix of entertainment, information, news and views, Akashvani and Doordarshan will be converted into Corporations."

So, you see the common factor. Everyone has been saying that Autonomy will be conferred on Akashvani and Doordarshan. On this, there are no difference of view. Now, kindly see the Statement of Objects and Reasons... (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: They may repeat the something when other people will be speaking. Therefore, I would request the hon. Members to keep silence.

[*Translation*]

SHRI VASANT SATHE: There can be much wrangle on it. If you say that I should not speak, I would sit down.

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH (Aonla): Sometime you tease us and sometime we tease you.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Such teasing can be there and I do not mind it but there should not be a running commentary. (*Interruptions*)

[*English*]

We used to get running commentaries and not like this. But let there not be any running commentary from the people who do not know what the subject is. What is the meaning of the word 'Autonomy'? If you take even the ordinary English Dictionary meaning, the word 'Autonomy' means the power or right of self-Government, especially partial self-Government. If you say that you want to create an independent body, then it is a different thing. Independence means not subordinate but complete self-Government.

Now, Kindly see what has the Government tried to do.

"It is the Government's declared policy to confer autonomy on Akashvani and Doordarshan...

.....thereby ensuring that they function in a fair, objective and creative manner."

There are 28,000 employees in AIR and Doordarshan, who have served all their life this important media. Is there even a letter in this entire Bill, a word which confers any autonomy on right from DG, Doordarshan to people down below, even one word conferring any authority, respect or autonomy on these people? None at all. On the contrary, what have you done is that lock, stock and barrel, all of them have been transferred as servants of the so-called 11 wisemen who have been thought of as governors of a new Corporation. I cannot understand why do you want to deceive ourselves? Whom are we trying to deceive? We have been talking of workers' participation in the management; we have been saying that the people should have equal rights and voice in the management. Only then excellence will come. This we have been speaking on all fora. In the Board of Governors, there is no place for DG, AIR or DG, Doordarshan or anyone from Doordarshan or AIR on whom you have been wanting to confer autonomy. Therefore, the very first concept of autonomy means giving some greater authority to those who are already there to create altogether a new body. When we talk of States in this country which want autonomous powers, greater powers, State-Centre Relations, we say, give greater powers to the States; we are in favour of doing that. But is not there a distinction between giving greater powers, autonomous powers and sufficient independence? Therefore, what you are trying here is, in fact, *abinitio* falsehood and a fraud on the concept of autonomy, because in the same breath, in the next sentence of the Statement of Objects and Reasons, what do you say having said that you want to confer auton-

omy on Doordarshan and AIR—you say as follows:

"It is in this context that it is proposed to provide for the establishment of an autonomous Corporation to be known as 'Prasar Bharati' (Broadcasting Corporation of India) and to entrust to it the functions which are at present discharged by Akashvani and Doordarshan."

Finished. So, Akashvani and Doordarshan, whatever they are doing today, what they have been doing all these years, all those functions, the entire body will be transferred to this new Corporation that you are going to create. *(Interruptions)* That is your purpose; that is the intention. Then be honest and say so. I would have appreciated if the Government had the courage to say that they want a totally independent organisation, and they do not want it to be responsible, in any way, either to parliament or Government and be completely free. That I could have understood. Have the courage. All I am saying is, have the honesty to say so. They do not. You think that you are going to gloss over words and cheat not only the people of India but, as I present showed in the entire body of the Bill, the Parliament itself. Sir, lollipops are being thrown before the Parliament. The hon. Minister Shri P. Upendra thinks that the Members of Parliament are so gullible. All that he has to do is to say, annual report will be presented like the annual reports of the various corporations in the country, such as Coal India, SAIL and others. Are they ever discussed here?... *(Interruptions)*

SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN (Cannanore): Tirupati Laddu.

SHRI VASANT SAHTE: This is like a Tirupati Laddu which he has thrown in the Bill. Earlier he had said, "We will ask them to give explanation. If they do not do it, if they fail to do so, we shall have the power to take over." We thought, oh, there is something if Parliament raises its voice, if it says that

something is wrong, then the Government can act. But see...

[Translation]

But it is the case of running away with tail between the legs. If someone says loudly, they change their stand that now they would not do that.

[English]

Now we will not do. What will we do? Give us the explanation. If you do not give us the explanation, we will submit a report to the Parliament. "What will the Parliament do? It will pass a resolution. Where is the provision for implementing it?... *(Interruptions)*

SHRI NIRMAL KANTI CHATTERJEE (Dumdum): Take it in Zero Hour.... *(Interruptions)*

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Yes, you are right. Mr. Nirmal Chatterjee and ourselves will be discussing it in Zero Hour and the entire thing will be zero.

What is the intention of the Government in this Bill? I oppose the very concept of fraud on autonomy. My objection is that in the name of autonomy, you have defrauded mainly the people who are working in AIR and Doordarshan. You have no respect for them. If you see the body in Section 11, where you transfer all of them, they will be at the mercy of the so-called eleven people. Who are these 11 people?... *(Interruptions)*

SHRI TARIT BARAN TOPDAR (Barackpore): What are your suggestions?

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Let me deal with it in my own way. I do not have the wisdom which you have.

Kindly see, what is they body? Let us first understand the structure. Basically it is the structure which will determine what kind of an organisation you are going to have. To whom you are going to transfer with one stroke of this Bill properties and assets cre-

[Sh. Vasant Sathe]

ated with peoples money for all these years, Which run today to over hundreds of crores of rupees—not only the buildings here, not only the towers, but all over the country the whole network, which will run to, if you calculate, atleast thousand crores of rupess if not more? All these properties will be transferred, as per this Bill, immediately to this body of eleven wise men. Who are those? Firstly, they said, an eminent man, the Chairman will be there. Under his control, guidance, the body will work, the Board of Governors will work. Now they have diluted that also. That Chairman, a poor chap, has become a part-time Chairman. Kindly see the position Section 4 says:

“The Chairman and the other Governors except the nominated Governor, shall be appointed by the President of India on the recommendations of a Committee consisting of...”

He has told what the Committee is.

Para 3 of that says:

“That Chairman and the part-time Governors shall be persons of eminence in public life.”

This is about the eminence. Then it further says:

“The Executive Governor shall be a person having special knowledge or practical experience in respect of such matters as administration, management, broadcasting, education, literature, culture, arts, music, dramatics or journalism; the Governor (Finance) shall be a person having special knowledge or practical experience in respect of financial matters and the Governor (Personnel) shall be a person having special knowledge or practical experience in respect of personnel management and administration.”

And this is the new amendment which has been proposed.

“The Executive Governor shall be the Chief Executive of the Corporation and shall, subject to the control and supervision of the Chairman, exercise such powers and discharge such functions of the Board of Governors as it may delegate to him...”

The Chairman shall be part-time Governor and shall hold the office for a term of six years from the date on which he enters upon his office.”

The Executive Governor, the Governor (Finance) and the Governor (Personnel) shall be whole-time Governors and each such Governor shall hold office for a term of six years from the date on which he enters upon his office or until he attains the age of 62 years whichever is earlier.

I would like to know, DE FACTO who are the controlling people. I have read the terms of office requirements. I would request any hon. Member through you to consider whether public men really, howsoever eminent they may be, will fulfil the qualifications for this Executive Governor. The best persons qualified will be retired bureaucrats. The first criteria is administration. They very often our bureaucrats have also handled some public sector units. So they have the experience of management also. Unless you say they you want to induct some managerial people from private sector and say that they are qualified, whom are you going to have this qualification for Chief Executive Governor? About finance, the same personnel are there those who have managed labour handling. So in effect you are going to create this body not of any eminent experts having media knowledge but mainly administrative people and managerial people to whom you are going to hand over this whole media, electronic media and all that. After all, as he said, if Parliament has to face it, Parliament should have even no voice; no questions can be asked because what he said was that it is the Government which will

ask for information. The Parliament will have zero hour or other time to raise voice and then the Minister will be kind enough to say that please give this information. What kind of a joke are you trying to perpetrate on the parliament and the people? The people of this country, through their elected representatives—I am not taking of any party; whosoever they are—do not have a voice on a very important medium with which they are day-to-day going to be concerned. To give examples of some statutory bodies like Election Commission or Public Accounts Committee or even Supreme Court for that matter, they have their own statutory functions. They do not come in day-to-day relations with the people of this country, nor with the Members of Parliament. But here is a medium. I have been warning my friend Shri Upendra, right from the beginning, that he is thinking of doing something where he will be abdicating his functions as a Government representing the people of this country. Here is a very important medium which you must use for the benefit of the people. Once you give up your responsibility and say that hereafter you have nothing to do with it, except asking for some information and some report annually and then it will be placed and we will be doing a *post mortem* on it here, with that kind of a thing, you will really land this whole country in a very serious handicap. If you lose this most important medium... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI P. UPENDRA: Now the cat is out of the bag.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: There is no question of any cat. I have been saying it. Sir, I have been saying that this medium must be used and, therefore, if you want it to be used more efficiently, give greater autonomy to the people who are working in the Doordarshan and the A.I.R. I know it from my personal experience that our people in both A.I.R and Doordarshan, if given a chance, given an authority, given the freedom, have done excellent job... (*Interruptions*)

AN HON. MEMBER: Have you experimented?

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Yes. I do not know what Inderjit Ji's experience is. I will give you an example. At the time of ASIAD, people went all over the world to ask Japan, USA and others to come and telecast and film our ASIAD... (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please.

SHRI VASANT SAHTE: We in the Doordarshan at that time did not have even a single O.B. Van. We did not have the small ENG cameras for coverage of such a thing. I discussed this with the engineers, with the programme people, and they said even in a short time if they are given an opportunity, they will be able to do the told the Government that trust our people and they will do the job. And, Sir, ultimately what happened? Only four O.B. Vans were made available, twenty ENG cameras were made available, and with that and with a little training in Germany and other places from where these cameras and O.B. Vans were brought, you know what wonderful job they had done. The world had appreciated the coverage that was done. You should be thankful and you should appreciate the good work which our people are capable of doing and have done. Not only this, Tele Clubs, Ministers appearing, all these programmes were started with the help of our people and they had done a good job on that as well. If you want to improve their functioning, give them more powers. Those who talk in the name of giving greater powers to the employees and workers, to them I will plead that give more powers, give greater autonomy and authority to the people in AIR and Doordarshan. They will do a wonderful job. It will go down in the history. As it is, today, the only power for asking information, etc. is being retained by the Minister in the name of the Government (*Interruptions*). Now, Sir, what is he doing today? It is 'Khula Munch' conducted as a latest clear example. It is a latest standing example of interference in the name of getting information

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Sir, here is the Minister who has called it 'Khula Manch'—Open Platform—and so we thought this will be something better than what was done in the past and let us see. The Minister himself had to admit after just two Ministers had appeared in the programme. In the first programme a dubbing actor was brought as an agriculturist.

SHRI P. UPENDRA: That was not correct. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI VASANT SATHE: The Hindustan Times people contradicted that. He tried to put the blame on the Hindustan Times people but they made it clear that they have nothing to do with it.

SHRI P. UPENDRA: He is a farmer and he continues to be a farmer. That has gone on record. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI VASANT SATHE: You were also a farmer before (*Interruptions*)

SHRI M.J. AKBAR (Kishanganj): Sir, out of forty million farmers, a part-time actor was Shri Ram Singh—the only one they could find. (*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Akbar, please take your seat. Don't interfere while he is speaking.

SHRI M.J. AKBAR: Sir, he has misled the House over and over again in the last week.

(*Interruptions*)

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Sir, not only this. The next Minister, Shri George Fernandes, was in the second programme. Sir, I hope when we had Mr. Dua's programme, no previous intimation on questions was given. You can ask Mr. Dua. But here the questions are given to the Minister beforehand as to who will ask which questions (*Interruptions*). The questions are taken and they are conveyed to the Minister (*Interrup-*

tions). If that is approved, the people who are doing the programme approve the questions—and once the questions are approved, I would like to know from the hon. Minister that when those questions are asked, whether the Minister is ready to reply because the question was related to Railways—Railways were stopped because of agitation and they had this problem. Secondly, here was a Minister who had handled the matter. So it was not as if an irrelevant question has been asked and the Minister is not concerned with it. I would like to know...

(*Interruptions*)

[*Translation*]

SHRI HARISH PAL (Meerut): I would like to know whether he is speaking on Prasar Bharati Bill or on present situation.

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Is this Khula manch not a programme of Doordarshan?

Finally, if authority and autonomy is to be given in this form that people who are appointed, those Governors and the Government headed by the Minister, if they are there indeed tomorrow, if this is happening today to the 'Khula Manch', God alone knows what will happen tomorrow with such people in charge because Parliament will have the voice. Today at least we can say something. Tomorrow the Minister will say, 'This is an independent corporation, autonomous corporation, I cannot reply to this question. If I do not know, I will be asking them to give me information which I will put at the end of the year in the Annual Report before the parliament and you get it discussed.' Then what is he talking of? Therefore, Sir, this very concept of this nature of the Board is alien to the concept of autonomy. (*Interruptions*) This is what I am talking.

[*Translation*]

If you have guts, give autonomy to the workers and to 38,000 AIR employees and if you do not have, please keep quiet.

[English]

Sir, the next question is about another fraud—the Broadcasting Council. (*Interruptions*) This is another body of irrelevant people. I do not know this 'eleven' number—some astrologer must have said that this is a lucky number. (*Interruptions*) Another 11 wise members—poor chaps! What is their function? They will receive complaints and after all that, I just read these portions and my friends will appreciate what is the fraud, I am meaning that they are having a Broadcasting Council to look over, to monitor. Then the complaints come from the people, even Members of Parliament may complain that something wrong was done about their constituency, etc. They will hear all that and if they find that the complaint given by another hon. Member of Parliament is justified, then, Sir, what do they do? They say in clause 14 of this Bill:

"(1) The Broadcasting Council shall receive and consider complaints from—

- (i) any person or group of persons alleging that a certain programme or broadcast or the functioning of the Corporation in specific cases or in general is not in accordance with the objectives for which the Corporation is established." etc.

Then, Sir, what happens? Sub-para (4V) says:

"If the complaint is found to be justified either wholly or in part, the Broadcasting Council shall advise the Executive Governor to take appropriate action."

It is as if the Broadcasting Council presided over by such an eminent person will give an advice to the Executive Governor saying,

[Translation]

It is the advice of the Governor. This complaint has been received, so look into it.

[English]

and then, not only this. It does not stop there. It says:

"(5) If the Executive Governor is unable to accept the recommendation of the Broadcasting Council, he shall place such recommendation before the Board of Governors for its decision thereon."

And then, Sir, here is the climax when it says in sub-para (6):

"If the Board of Governors is also unable to accept the recommendation of the Broadcasting Council, it shall record its reasons therefor and inform the Broadcasting Council accordingly,"

[Translation]

What a funny thing it is.

[English]

After this stage of getting information and finding that some injustice has been done, just imagine all the Members of Parliament who are here, if they make complaints or their constituents make some genuine complaints all that will happen is that a recommendation will go from the Broadcasting Council from which we are going to pay so much to the Executive Governor. That Governor is a Lord and will say that he did not accept the recommendation and would ask it to be placed before the Board. The Board will say that they did not accept and would inform you about that. Then, at the end of the year, that would be placed before the Parliament so that you also helplessly because you cannot do anything more at the most pass a resolution saying that we disapprove all these things. Is this to a farce?

MR. CHAIRMAN: How much more time do you require?

SHRI VASANT SATHE: Sir, I would like to continue tomorrow for some time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You will continue tomorrow.

16.02 hrs.

DISCUSSION UNDER RULE 193

Atrocities on Women In Different Parts of the Country

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, the House shall take up the discussion under Rule 193, on the topic 'Atrocities on women in different parts of the country.'

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE (Panskura): Mr. Chairman, Sir, first of all, I beg your pardon because a peculiar situation has arisen. All my papers are stuck in the lift which is in the ground floor.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is also an atrocity.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE: Anyway, I will begin now and I will take my papers later.

I rise to move my motion on atrocities in different parts of the country with a bleeding heart and burning shame. I appeal to all in the house to sincerely share the agony without any partisan rancour, as this is an area where dedicated and determined efforts are urgently needed to rouse the whole society's conscience.

Women always are the worst victims of caste and communal riots. Here itself, it has been going on for quite some days. I hope you yourself have heard, the whole House has heard and shared the agony. Then, they are the most deprived also in the economic field. A vast majority of them suffer from inequality in economic sphere. Again, a vast majority of them are the most oppressed in the social life and in individual families. Gang

rape, mass rape, custodial rape and individual rapes and molestations increasing at a shocking rate in different parts of the country bear testimony to it. Women again are the worst sufferers of the debased culture of consumerism expressed in ever increasing dowry deaths. They again are the worst victims of discrimination in the family as a girl child. Even when they have some opportunities to enter the economic field, either in the village or in the city, either as agricultural workers or in the services, they are the worst sufferers of sexual abuse by the bosses. I do not mean all the bosses, but it is very prevalent. In one word, in all fields of life, be it economic, be it social be it political or be it in the field of education or health, despite some advances of certain sections of women after independence, they still remain second class citizens. Most regrettably, atrocities on women in different parts of the country are increasing menacingly and are becoming more brutal. This is the hard truth which we must face and try to fight with matchingly increasing dedication and determination. In my opinion, it is the job of this House to search for the causes and try to evolve the remedies.

I need not probably mention the individual incidents because every morning if you turn the pages of newspapers one or the other, more often more than one cases of atrocities from all over the country are reported which should put the whole country in shame. And if one remembers that what is reported is only the tip of the iceberg, the immensity of the dimension can be easily conceived.

Just to refresh the memory, it would be enough to recall the names of a few places surely not all by any chance where inhuman atrocities in the shape of group rapes, gang rape, mass rape and other kinds of atrocities of the worst sort have taken place in the recent past. They are Ujan Maidan of Tripura, Bhand of Madhya Pradesh, Fotehpur and the place near Agra, (about which there was lot of discussion during the debate on atrocities against Scheduled Castes and Schedule & Tribes) Gajraula of Uttar Pradesh, Pararia-