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## **Prasar Bharati**

Prasar Bharati (abbreviated as PB; Hindi: Praśar Bharati, lit. Indian Broadcaster) is India's state-owned public broadcaster, headquartered in New Delhi. It is a statutory autonomous body set up by an Act of Parliament and comprises the Doordarshan Television Network and Akashvani All India Radio, which were earlier media units of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. The Parliament of India passed the Prasar Bharati Act to grant this autonomy in 1990, but it was not enacted until 15 September 1997.

The Prasar Bharati board chairperson's position remains vacant since Dr A. Surya Prakash finished his second term in February 2020.[3] He had succeeded Dr Mrinal Pande.[4] Sh. Gaurav Dwivedi is the CEO of Prasar Bharati (he succeeded Shashi Shekhar Vempati who was the CEO until June 2022).

Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2021 revealed that DD News and All India Radio are the most trusted News brands in India.

## **Prasar Bharti Act**

The Prasar Bharati Act provides for the establishment of a Broadcasting Corporation, to be known as Prasar Bharati, and define its composition, functions, and powers. The Act grants autonomy to All India Radio and to Doordarshan, both of which were previously under government control. The Act received the assent of the President of India on 12 September 1990 after being unanimously passed by Parliament. It was finally implemented in November 1997. By the Prasar Bharati Act, all property, assets, debts, liabilities, payments of money due, as well as all suits and legal proceedings involving Akashvani (All India Radio) and Doordarshan were transferred to Prasar Bharati.

The organization started as All India Radio (AIR) in the past and Doordarshan (DD) was born to cater television services later and finally came Prasar Bharati (PB) by enactment of an act by the parliament,

## **Board**

The Prasar Bharati Act vests the general superintendence, direction, and management of affairs of the Corporation in the Prasar Bharati Board which may exercise all such powers and do all such acts and things as may be exercised or done by the corporation.

The Prasar Bharati Board consists of:

- Chairman
- One Executive Member
- One Member (Finance)
- One Member (Personnel)
- Six Part-time Members
- Director-General (Akashvani), ex officio
- Director-General (Doordarshan), ex officio
- One representative of the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (India), to be nominated by that Ministry and
- Two representatives of the employees, of whom one shall be elected by the engineering staff from amongst themselves and one shall be elected by the other employee from amongst themselves.
- The President of India appoints the chairman and the other Members, except the ex officio members, nominated member and the elected members. Board meetings must be held at least once in every three months each year.

### **Revenue growth**

At nearly Rs 1350 crore, Prasar Bharati closed the financial year 2021–2022 with a strong revenue growth of 13 percent from commercial operations. Prasar Bharati Chief Executive Officer Shashi Shekhar Vempati explained through tweets that the growth was “fuelled primarily by strong post COVID recovery of All India Radio and continued growth momentum of FreeDish and Digital despite uncertainty of pandemic. While road to financial self sustainability for the Public Broadcaster is a way off, foundation has been laid with key reforms such as phase out of obsolete technologies, consolidation of redundant operations, IT/Digital enablement of functions and new avenues for monetization.”

## **Funding of public broadcaster in India**

Responding to claims of Prasar Bharati being run on public money, Prasar Bharati CEO Shashi Shekhar Vempati through a tweet[13] clarified that DD has to earn its money to run its operations. Public money does not fund broadcast operational expenditure of DD. Public funding is only to the extent of salaries of government employees on deputation to DD.

In 2019, addressing the gathering at Kautilya Fellows Programme, Prasar Bharati CEO Shashi Shekhar Vempati elaborated upon the difference between funding of public broadcasters in other countries and in India, "In India, we have a very different model for two reasons. First, when Prasar Bharati was created in 1997, all the assets of the AIR and Doordarshan were transferred to this corporation, but it is not a corporation in the true sense. Corporates in India come under Companies Act and this Act defines whether you are a public undertaking, whether you are a government company or whether you are a limited liability partnership etc. Prasar Bharati doesn't come under the ambit of the Companies Act. So, it is not a corporate in true sense, it's a statutory autonomous body. Secondly, when it was created in 1997, all of the employees of DD and AIR continued to remain employees of the Government of India. So we have this hybrid model where the corporate is autonomous but everyone working within it are the employees of the government. What this also means is that their salaries, pensions etc., is funded from the government. So if you take away these wages and related expenses, all of the operational expenditure has to be funded by revenue generation from commercial advertising and sponsorship and whatever other commercial activities Prasar Bharati can undertake, which is a huge challenge because nowhere in the world does a public broadcaster sustains itself through advertising. In India, we ended up doing it because of the unique model we have where operations have to be funded from our revenues."

## **Public Broadcasting in India over last eight years**

Public Broadcasting landscape in India has seen a dramatic transformation since 2014, inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mantra of making Sabka Prayas a mass movement.

Over the past 8 years, DD FreeDish has seen dramatic growth doubling its reach. DD FreeDish DTH has emerged as the largest free to air public DTH platform serving more than 4.5 crore

families. During COVID-19 lockdown when schools were not functioning, the educational TV channels on DD FreeDish DTH came to the aid of millions of students across India.

During COVID, DD and AIR emerged as forces for the greater public good playing a critical role in social messaging at every stage from precautions to COVID appropriate behavior to overcoming Vaccine hesitancy. Industry data has estimated that COVID-19 social messaging by Doordarshan was amongst the highest across TV channels in India. The newly created PBNS digital news unit played an active role in busting fake news working in tandem with PIB's Fact-check Unit.

Prasar Bharati has undertaken the single biggest reform in Television Broadcasting in India with the phasing out of more than 1200 obsolete Analog Terrestrial TV Transmitters. This has not only saved crores of expenditure of Doordarshan but it has made valuable UHF Spectrum available for expanding 5G services and Rural Communication services

Key technology reforms over the last 8 years including the infusion of Information Technology systems across DD and AIR ensured that the 25,000 humongous work force and more than 1000 Offices, Broadcasting Centres across the country managed to remain operational with 24\*7 news services, educational and entertainment programming.

The footprint of Doordarshan has expanded significantly between 2017 and 2021. In 2017, the number of satellite channels stood at 23 as opposed to 36 in 2021. A dedicated channel for Agriculture was launched in the form of DD Kisan which has since made natural farming a mass movement. Many new regional channels, including DD Arun Prabha, DD Chattisgarh, DD Uttarakhand, DD Jharkhand and DD Assam, have been added to the bouquet of DD channels to serve the needs of areas which were earlier ignored.

Doordarshan's international English News channel DD India has seen phenomenal growth lately. In terms of TV reach, DD India recently became number one English News channel in the country. Even the viewership for DD India has witnessed a consistent upward trend, registering a whopping total growth of almost 150%. Staying true to its mandate with which it was launched

by Prasar Bharati in January 2019, DD India has now become India's window to the world with reach to Korea, Bangladesh, Mauritius, Maldives, Australia, USA, UK, Canada and more than 190 countries through Satellite and OTT platforms.

To cover as much area and population as possible across the country, All India Radio network has also expanded its footprint from 412 FM channels in 2017 to 514 in 2021 and from 413 stations in 2017 to 485 in 2021. This has further been augmented by more than 40 satellite radio channels available through DD FreeDish accessible across the land mass of India.

Prasar Bharati has expanded social media base of DD and AIR with more than 300 Twitter handles, 190+ YouTube channels and NewsOnAir App with more than 2 Million downloads. Digital is now integral to all broadcast activities with daily 800+ digital uploads happening across the networks of DD and AIR. NewsOnAir App has made AIR stations accessible across the world in more than 190 countries. The App has around 270 AIR live-streams.

To make the public broadcaster's content more inclusive, Doordarshan now provides sign language commentary for major events like Republic Day, Mann Ki Baat, and weekly Cabinet briefings. To make the public broadcaster's content more inclusive, Doordarshan now provides sign language commentary for major events like Republic Day, Mann Ki Baat, and weekly Cabinet briefings.

Preserving and restoring India's culture, tradition and history, Prasar Bharati Archives digitized rare audio-video content exclusively available with All India Radio and Doordarshan since 1930s.

As an effort towards realizing PM Modi's vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat in broadcasting, Prasar Bharati has also established a Centre of Excellence for Media and Broadcasting Technologies at IIT Kanpur, to explore direct to mobile 5G broadcasting, AI and other emerging areas.