

# Don't infringe on autonomy: Prasara Bharati to govt

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**NEW DELHI:** Public broadcaster Prasara Bharati (PB) has turned down a resolution moved by the Union ministry of information and broadcasting (I&B) to appoint a serving IAS officer to its board, and deferred its proposal to bring in professionals to head the news service units of Doordarshan and All India Radio, people familiar with the developments said on Thursday.

A board meeting headed by its chairperson A Surya Prakash, the broadcaster concluded that accepting the resolutions moved by the ministry would "amount to infringing upon Prasara Bharati's autonomy".

A government official, who was present at the meeting as the ministry's representative, could not be reached for comment.

The board refused to appoint a serving IAS officer as a member (personnel) on grounds that the appointment would go against the norms laid down in The Prasara Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Act, 1990. "The Act clearly says the appointments to the board will be made on the recommendation of a committee headed by the vice president. The chairperson

## 'CONTENTIONS' AT THE BOARD MEETING

Prasara Bharati (PB) turned down a resolution moved by the ministry to appoint a serving IAS officer to its board. The PB Act has not provision to have a serving bureaucrat on its board

pointed out that if the appointments are made based on the recommendations of the ministry, it would amount to denigrating the office of the vice president and also erode the autonomy of Prasara Bharati," said an official, who asked not to be named.

The PB also did not approve the proposal to fill two top editorial posts - head of DD News and chief editor of PB news services - finding the salaries negotiated between the I&B and the two individuals as 'exorbitant'

Prasara Bharati's board comprises a chairman, an executive member (CEO), two members (finance and personnel), six part-time members, a representative of the I&B ministry, and the director generals of All India Radio and Doordarshan as ex-officio members. There is no provision to have a serving bureaucrat on the board.

After the last member (personnel) demitted the office, the charge was given to member (finance) and the position was advertised, but no candidates were found suitable for the post, another PB official said.

The ministry had moved a resolution proposing the appointment of two journalists as head of DD News and chief editor of PB news services. The broadcaster did not approve this proposal either, citing its autonomy.

"The board found that the annual salaries negotiated

between these individuals and the ministry — Rs 1 crore for the post of DD News head and Rs 75 lakh for PB's chief editor — were exorbitant and deferred taking a decision on these appointments," said the second official quoted above.

The board disagreed with the ministry's suggestion to let go off its contractual staff, a suggestion that was made to trim the organisation's strength, one of the officials cited above said. A manpower audit of the PB, as suggested by various committees, including the Sam Pitroda committee will soon be conducted to identify overstaffed sections.