

HUMAN RESOURCE

Prasar Bharati is perhaps the largest public service broadcaster in the world in terms of services provided and staff strength. It oversees Doordarshan, broadcasting 21 television channels and AIR with a network of 376 broadcasting stations. The workforce at Prasar Bharati has expanded over the years to meet its increasing programming, transmission and logistical support needs. It currently has 31,621 full time employees and 7,269 casual employees. Yet, today it faces challenges on many fronts:

- Rapid and constantly evolving technology changes
- Competition from private sector
- Emergence of new delivery and engagement channels

PrasarBharati's two constituent units – Doordarshan and All India Radio – used to be home to great talent and retained the largest broadcasting infrastructure in the country. The failure to set in place proper systems and to transition from being a government department to an autonomous public institution with its own organisation, human resources and management policies has led to severe erosion of PrasarBharati's ability to be a cohesive broadcaster and to compete adequately with private channels, leave alone fulfil its mandate.

In order to re-energise the organisation and enhance its productivity, this Committee makes the following recommendations.

- 3.1 Enable Prasar Bharati with the power to frame rules and regulations for its employees without seeking prior approval of the Government.

A major reason for Prasar Bharati being created as a statutory body was to give autonomy to AIR and DD in order that they maintain an arm's length relationship from the Government of the day. Yet, Prasar Bharati continues to be dependent on the Government in a variety of ways. In order to provide Prasar Bharati greater flexibility in prescribing the conditions of service of its own employees and for it to be better able to attract the talent and to respond to changing market conditions, it is imperative that Prasar Bharati has the power to frame rules and regulations for its employees without seeking prior approval of the Central Government.

Thus, Section 32 and the proviso to Section 33(2) of the Prasar Bharati Act which makes it mandatory to get the prior approval of the Central Government to frame the rules and regulations regarding any matters, including the conditions of service of the officers and employees, and the methods of recruitment for selection of employees etc. need to be amended.

- 3.2 Undertake a comprehensive manpower audit and HR planning exercise to map workforce requirements for the future in line with Prasar Bharati's mandate.

There has been no systematic, independent and professional review of the norms, staffing and structure of the existing workforce and the requirements of Prasar Bharati for the medium and long term. Such planning cannot be done without clarity about the vision of Prasar Bharati for the next five to ten years, after factoring in the impact of the mix of technologies it opts for. It is recommended that a thorough manpower assessment and audit be conducted and an optimal organisational structure and clear job roles along with profiles be drawn up.

- 3.3 Supplement manpower audit with a re-deployment plan that addresses training, re-skilling and promotion of existing manpower through an institutionalised modern appraisal system.

The manpower audit recommended above should be followed by a redeployment plan and surplus resources should be given the option of re-locating and/or re-skilling. This is inevitable with the gradual obsolescence of the analog terrestrial broadcast system and the onset of digitisation. In addition, a suitable action plan including repatriation to Government should be developed, and jobs found redundant post review should be formally abolished.

- 3.4 Create an effective recruitment system to attract the best talent and allow the hiring of skilled professionals.

The Prasar Bharati Act 1990 provides for the creation of one or more Recruitment Boards. Such a mechanism needs to be constituted at the earliest as the absence of this body is one of the principal causes for virtually no recruitment having taken place since Prasar Bharati came into being in 1997. This body would be responsible for recruitment and promotion of all Prasar Bharati employees based on a professional appraisal system. A professional recruitment system will also allow Prasar Bharati to attract the best talent with specialised skills, and offer competitive remuneration packages to such talent.

- 3.5 Encourage and initiate steps for absorption of Government employees as full-time employees of the organisation, after an appropriate screening process. The ones who remain in Government may be considered for absorption in other departments within the Government, as is done in other cases.

After amendments were made to Section 11 of the Prasar Bharati Act in 2012, more than 90 per cent of the total 31,621 full time employees have been placed on 'deemed deputation' with Prasar Bharati. This amendment has put Prasar Bharati in a difficult position as it has no control on determining the pay structure or conditions of service of these employees. It cannot impose major penalties of compulsory retirement, removal or dismissal from service for these employees even in cases of serious irregularities as the central government continues to be their principal employer.

All staff on 'deemed deputation' should be encouraged to join Prasar Bharati as its full-time employees, or, if they so desire, revert back to Government. Once the content, role and technology of Prasar Bharati are refined, the organisation should re-skill the employees who have opted to be absorbed. Any extra manpower not required by Prasar Bharati may be redeployed by the Ministry of I&B to another function/department within the government.

3.6 Prasar Bharati should have the power to frame rules and regulations for its employees without seeking prior approval of the Government.

A major reason for Prasar Bharati being created as a statutory body was to give autonomy to AIR and DD for them to maintain an arm's length relationship from the Government of the day. Yet, Prasar Bharati continues to be dependent on the Government in a variety of ways. In order to provide Prasar Bharati greater flexibility in prescribing the conditions of service of its own employees and for it to be better able to attract the talent and to respond to changing market conditions, it is imperative that Prasar Bharati has the power to frame rules and regulations for its employees without seeking prior approval of the Central Government. Thus Section 32 and the proviso to Section 33(2) of the Act which makes it mandatory to get the prior approval of the Central Government to the rules and regulations regarding any matters including the conditions of service of the officers and employees and the methods of recruitment for selection of employees etc. need to be amended.

*Employees of AIR and DD continue to be government servants till today, although they were to be transferred to Prasar Bharati. Amendment made in 2012 has provided that employees recruited up to 5th October, 2007 shall be government servants on deemed deputation with Prasar Bharati. The amendment further provides that Prasar Bharati shall have disciplinary powers over government servants, but such powers shall not include the power of removal, dismissal and compulsory retirement.