

Prasar Bharati miffed at BARC over delay in release of rural TV data

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NEW DELHI: Upset that the present "urban centric" TV ratings were hurting its revenue prospects, public broadcaster Prasar Bharati has criticised the delay by Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) in releasing the viewership data of rural households.

Officials told PTI that Prasar Bharati was unhappy over the continued postponement of the rural ratings rollout, which was expected to take place in July, then September, but has again been postponed.



"There were serious concerns about the accuracy of the earlier system of ratings by TAM and that was one major reason that BARC was set up through efforts of broadcasters and other bodies to provide more authentic data.

"However, the disappointing part is that at the moment, BARC is releasing only urban ratings, which could raise questions about its credibility," sources in Prasar Bharati said.

Displeased with the continuous postponements, Prasar Bharati CEO Jawhar Sircar has written a strongly-worded letter to BARC India CEO Partho Dasgupta asking it to release the rural data immediately.

Sources said that Sircar has expressed his dissatisfaction with the "present partial (urban centric) coverage of BARC" claiming it was damaging the public broadcaster's revenue prospects and has affected its standing in the market.

Sircar, in his letter, is learnt to have mentioned that Prasar Bharati had been patient as it is a public broadcaster that had helped found BARC.

"Our agreement with BARC was that the rural rollout would take place in July, which went to September and now it is postponed again," Sircar said, adding that he felt that as a non-profit public entity, Prasar Bharati was not getting a fair deal.

When contacted, Sircar confirmed that Prasar Bharati was upset at the delay in the release of rural TV viewership data.

"As a public broadcaster, we have maintained patience and decorum even when we have been hurt with data that is far from being representative. Six months is more than enough and BARC should release the data of the rural half of TV homes," he said.