

BUREAUCRACY TODAY

Bureaucracy Today meets the charismatic CEO of Prasar Bharati, Jawhar Sircar. The 1975 batch IAS officer of the West Bengal cadre is our Bureaucrat of the month. He is on a mission to transform Prasar Bharati and is using his astute skills to enable this organization to be one that should not only serve the public interest but also run efficiently.

By Sohini Mukerjee

It is twilight when we walk into Prasar Bharati Chief Executive Officer Jawhar Sircar's immaculately done office at PTI Bhawan, New Delhi. The atmosphere is lively as Sircar conducts a meeting with a group of people and invites us to be part of what is a normal day for him. "I always wanted to get into a relatively free profession such as teaching", he says as we settle down and take in the warm tones of his office. However, various incidents at the time of doing graduation at Kolkata's Presidency College which he attended during the peak of the Naxalite movement put an end to his teaching aspirations. "I appeared for the IAS exams and by luck or fluke I got through", smiles the former Ministry of Culture Secretary who is considered to be one of the best bureaucrats in our country. At the helm of Prasar Bharati since February 2012, Sircar has been instrumental in using his acumen to bring about changes and infuse life into this organization.

After completing a year of his stint at Prasar Bharati, the CEO says that he leaves it to people to judge how his performance has been so far. The positive changes in the organization and its working are apparent. "There is a lot more visibility of Prasar Bharati now as compared to the past. We are on the air through our advertisements. We have also made consistent efforts to bring in a lot of new talent. This has also caused a lot of heartburn as many insiders are not very happy with the infusion of these new initiatives", he laughingly points out. However, Sircar is undeterred since without changes "an organization tends to become myopic." "The circulation of its blood is affected", he adds.

Reforming Prasar Bharati

"Assuming the reins of the public broadcaster came with an extraordinary set of challenges", agrees Sircar. He says, "At Prasar Bharati we have 400 stations of various types. I wonder if there is any other broadcaster in the world which has to cater to such a vast network of radio and TV stations. In addition, we have 1,900 transmitters and 35 satellite channels which must function without any fault." Sircar also points out that the outreach of Prasar Bharati is massive. "Much of rural India is still covered by our terrestrial network. Even though most people assume that all of urban India watches only cable or satellite television, examining the depths of urban India will lead you to a different conclusion altogether. You will find all sorts of free-to-air services being utilized even in urban India." Industry estimates provide figures of around 15 million households being covered by terrestrial networks. This translates into a gigantic figure of almost 90 million people being catered to by Prasar Bharati. A boon and bane at the same time, according to Sircar. "In terms of reach no one can compete with us. However, in terms of requirement and management of manpower equipment it can be quite a challenge. The scale of operations at a terrestrial network has a lot of allied problems. Maintaining available resources while trying to modernize and make new changes is no

easy feat. The key is to work around these challenges and revive the organization and we have been taking constructive steps towards this process”, says Sircar who has achieved this through constant monitoring, improving the quality of programmes, the adaptation of technology and concentrating on manpower. He also dev

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