

# Govt cuts grants for Prasar Bharati

Prasar Bharati's grants cut by 25.6% to Rs.392.42 crore for 2015-16 under planned budget



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**New Delhi:** The Information and Broadcasting ministry has cut grants for public broadcaster Prasar Bharati by 25.6% to `392.42 crore for 2015-16 under planned budget.

It initially allocated `527.43 crore as grants-in-aid for the year, according to the ministry's annual report 2015-16, released on Tuesday.

As per the report, the ministry has also proposed a similar budget plan for the year 2016-17 and allocated a sum of `392 crore for planned expenditure.

Prasar Bharati includes All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan. AIR's home service includes 415 stations located across the nation. Doordarshan operates 36 channels including regional, state national and international channels and a multi-channel free-to-air direct-to-home (DTH) service, DD Free Dish.

Talking about the budget cut, Jawhar Sircar, chief executive officer at Prasar Bharati, said that the consumption capacity of the public

broadcaster was pegged around `350- 400 crore because of procedural delays in the ministry.

"The ministry has some antiquated tender procedures, which take about a year-and-a-half to pass a tender. This issue needs to be tackled as the tenders usually take three to four months to pass. There were around two-three projects which could not be finalised due to the interplay between democratic and technical processes," he said.

However, the budget for unplanned expenditure is estimated at `2,716 crore, which is 16% higher than the allocated budget in the previous financial year. The unplanned budget estimates (initial and revised) for 2015-16 stood at `2,342 crore.

The ministry, in its initial budget plan, had allocated funds for the recovery of analog towers and shortwave radios. "Analog towers and shortwave radios are outdated technologies. Doordarshan and AIR are moving towards digitization. There is no point in allocating money for the recovery of archaic technologies," Sircar added.

Earlier this month, Doordarshan launched a digital video broadcasting technology that allows its subscribers to watch DD channels on smartphones without any Internet connection. This service was launched in 16 cities, including the four metros.