

Influx of outsiders causes heartburn



No IAS officer or officer from the Central Services wants to come to the Corporation, says Prasar Bharati Corporation CEO Jawhar Sircar. Photo: Rajeev Bhatt

Rules have been flouted, say Information Services Cadre officials

Men in uniform are slowly but surely taking over the programming of Doordarshan and All India Radio.

The newly launched Kisan Channel, dedicated to the farmers by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 26, is manned by Group Captain Ranjan Mukherjee, Additional Director General (Operations) in Prasar Bharati Corporation. Mr. Mukherjee is from the Air Force and is on deputation for three years to Prasar Bharati.

“We all watch television and have a fair idea of what appeals to us and what does not. There is not much difference between managing a plane and managing a channel,” says Mr. Mukherjee, who has a postgraduate degree in agriculture economics from Banaras Hindu University.

Mr. Mukherjee revealed that his name perhaps cropped up during the tenure of former Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar, who was on the look out for a professional to man the Kisan Channel.

However, a senior Prasar Bharati Corporation official explained that Mr. Mukherjee was a choice made by outsiders, with the Board only endorsing the decision.

Then there is Group Captain P. Job Mathew, who assumed charge as Deputy Director General in Prasar Bharati on May 18. Earlier there was Brigadier (retd) S. Visvanathan, appointed as Additional Director General in Prasar Bharati Secretariat in December 2013. He was in charge of the immensely popular programme, Spoken Word on AIR, until he resigned. According to officials, 'he could not fit in.' Group Captain P.A. Naidu assumed charge as Additional Director General in Prasar Bharati in March this year. To this list can be added officials from the Indian Defence Estate Services and an officer from the Indian Revenue Service.

Not by design: CEO

Explaining the influx, Prasar Bharati Corporation CEO Jawhar Sircar denied it was by design.

“No IAS officer or officer from the Central Services wants to come to the corporation and no rules have been framed so far. No promotions have taken place in the last two decades. And there are 191 posts of Additional Director General-level officers lying vacant. The Prasar Bharati Board looks at the confidential reports of officials who express their willingness to join and takes a decision. If you can suggest someone better tell me,” said Mr. Sircar.

Mr. Sircar's comments indicate the rot that has set into the Corporation where professionalism has taken a backseat and no recruitment rules have been framed.

The recent appointments have led to considerable heartburn among officials from the Information Services Cadre, who say that the Indian Broadcasting Programme Service Rules have been flouted in the appointment of outsiders to man the programming of Doordarshan and All India Radio.