

Opening Ceremony

15th February, 2006 Session 3

Welcome Address by Sh. K.S. Sarma, CEO, Prasar Bharati

Hon'ble Minister, Information & Broadcasting, Parliamentary affairs, Govt. of India, Secretary I & B, Mr. Arora, who is the distinguished person giving the keynote address in the first session, Chairman, Prasar Bharati and very reputed journalist of our country Sh. M.V. Kamath, Mr. Mckinnon, Secretary General Commonwealth, Elizabeth, Secretary General CBA, the distinguished delegates, invitees, Ladies & Gentlemen. This is indeed a moment of great pride for me as an individual and as the Chief Executive, Prasar Bharati for this very great gathering that has been put together today for a period of three days. The General conference, the 26th General Conference of the CBA, which according to our AIR records, Ladies & Gentlemen , was held last time in India and I mentioned in the evening yesterday, also only 46 years ago. It is a matter of great pride to us that the CBA accepted our proposal to host this 26th General Conference at New Delhi, the place where, I am sure, apart from the Conference, about this, other attractions have made this gathering so large. On behalf of Prasar Bharati and CBA, first of all I welcome all of you and it's my great privilege to host you for the next three days on this occasion. We are deliberating basically the role of Public Broadcasters in an environment, a multi-platform environment to make a difference. Indeed, Mr, Arora just now commented as we were lighting the lamp that it is technology taking over tradition. There is no more a wick, there is no more a candle to light it but this is new technology. That's the challenge to all of us and we are going to debate this issue for the next 3 days in an atmosphere of mutual respects and in an atmosphere of cordiality and with a common purpose to make a difference in this multi-platform world. First of all I

thank all of you for having made it to New Delhi and it is so much of a coincidence that it was on 15th February, 1945, the CBA was founded by six nations during the war and that India and particularly AIR was one of its founder members. We are very happy that you have done and it is also a matter of coincidence, Ladies & Gentlemen that most of you arrived here yesterday the Valentine Day which is a day of love and most of you are leaving on the 18th for a visit to Agra and Taj Mahal in particular, and which is also a supreme symbol of love. And we in India, as I have mentioned in my written welcome address in our documents, consider a guest as God – “Athithi Devo Bhava”. To us in India, where spirituality is something very common & affects every individual in one way or the other, has a spiritual experience and we hope that you will get that feeling during these 3 days and in the same breath I’d like to also caution you if you don’t mind, that for most of you, our food could be rather spicy, but do enjoy it. We have number of doctors on the call and you will have no problem in enjoying it. I welcome all of you and we the public broadcasters are, as always, for the last 3 decades, we have always been at the cross roads. There is a fear that we’ll get marginalized, there is a fear that the new media will take over the traditional media but we are quite confident, Ladies & Gentlemen, that we will continue to be relevant and I hope the deliberations for the next 3 days make public broadcasters in their spirit and in their grit more relevant than before. I thank you once again and welcome you whole heartedly to this great city, and to this great country, in one word, is known for its extreme tolerance and I’m sure that in this world that is the most required attribute in every human beings mind and the every nation’s activities tolerance. Thank you very much. (clapping)

**Address by Mr. M. V. Kamath,
Chairman, Prasar Bharati Board**

Sh. Das Munshiji, distinguished guests on the dias and below, a very warm welcome to you. I must start first of all with a minor confession. Till the other day, I was not sure how many countries are members of the Commonwealth. I could have checked it with Internet, but out of sheer curiosity, I decided to find out whether someone else could enlighten me. I asked several people at random but no one had a clue. At that point of time, I realized that the Commonwealth arouses very little interest among anyone I know. That raises an important question. 60 years ago, Britain was exceedingly anxious that India should remain in the Commonwealth. Indeed, India gave an assurance that it would to the great relief of the British government. Presently the situation has changed. Membership of the Commonwealth seems to have become more a formality - something taken for granted. In an era of globalization, this is sad. Can we do something to enliven interest in its great international body? Unique in its own way, that cuts across continents, religions and cultures. Has the CBA a role to play? I think it has. We can suggest something for you for your contribution...we need to popularize the Commonwealth. It can be done with the active cooperation of all member countries. It can be done by devoting one hour each day for a one week for each Commonwealth country on our Public Broadcasting Channels. In 52 weeks, we can introduce 52 countries to our national viewer-ship because a country is just not in name. It has people. It is people. We must introduce the people in all their glory to the other member nations of the Commonwealth. We must bring to the attention of the world the great men and women, the poets, the scholars, the philosophers and the scientists, the artists and the artisans. Indeed all who contribute to the making of each of the Commonwealth nations. May I in all humility ask the CBA to discuss how this can be achieved and to persuade all member Public Broadcasting Corporations to do their bit in making this a success of this very vital endeavor. I could tell you about myself multi-ethnic, multi-lingual country. There are about 22 languages in this country. Actually there are 23, the last one has no script and it is called the language of love. We love our guests and our friends. You are both welcome to India. (clapping)

**Inaugural Address by Mr. Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi,
Minister of Information & Broadcasting, Govt. of India**

Mr. Kamath, Chairman of Prasar Bharati, Mr. Arora, Secretary of the Ministry of I & B, Mr. Sarma, CEO, Prasar Bharati, Secretary General Commonwealth Broadcasting Association, distinguished participants of this Association in this conference today, other officials, friends. Indeed, I am very happy this morning to be with you. In this historic and auspicious movement of your conference when actually it was born I read it was in 1945, the same year I was born and therefore, it has some association and emotional link with me. I don't know why I was born in India, obviously who was supporting the peace against the war, initiative launched by the forces known to all of you and therefore, in this meeting today, In this conference and I want to say a few things in the light of your growth and development. This association is grown, grown to share the common wisdom. In my course of graduation, I have my special subject Political Science and when I used to study before post-graduation, my teacher used to explain a lot on Commonwealth when I was a student of the school. I thought Commonwealth means, we have to share the wealth between all the nations, who is mostly surplus in category one or surplus in category B. Later when I grew up, I understood that is not correct. That's understood only in terms of Commonwealth but the real wealth is never shared. It is sharing the common wisdom. And I think sharing the common wisdom during the horror of war, you came together and provide this platform and I must say, it has helped enormously to increase the knowledge and information, which I share again. Commonwealth and therefore, the broadcasting association of yours, have a very rich contribution today throughout the world. It's knowledge, which is the power. It is information which ultimately determine the shape of a nation in terms of its development, difference between disparity and sexes and I must say, the role played by the broadcasters. They have also taken a very great path in strengthening the pluralistic society, in strengthening the democratic character and also the very roots and foundation of the democratic process to function.

Therefore, we the politicians, be in govt. and outside the govt., respect your contribution in this matter. But today, I cannot avoid to say that within this conference when you will start debating issues and to say that the time has also come in the growing economic development scenario, super power tensions, conflict and understanding within WTO and many other forums. The basic approach once again should be, how much information can prevail over the disinformation. The campaign of disinformation is dangerous. But ultimately the campaign of information establishing the truth is helpful, helpful for United Nations, helpful for Commonwealth, helpful for all the forums including the respective nations' parliament. I congratulated once one of my friends in London, who was in BBC, I was there in London during the controversy of whether the report of mass destruction weapon. Iraq is there or not and whether the statement of the British govt. some quarter was justified or not. Later on, I found throughout the world I do not like to talk diplomacy here, not to mention a nation, in the heart and heart of the people the information prevailed and when information prevailed and disinformation cannot dominate, obviously those who tried to uphold this information with all the facts got isolated and therefore, it is one of the most important role to be played these days. Now of course, the global tensions are reduced in many norms and forms, yet the content in the global family, pursuing the economic role to be played by respective nations and there by share of the wealth, share of the fruits, in the system that prevails in the respective nations. How it is right, how it is wrong, should definitely be articulated in the network system that is available to us. Your technology is so good, I must say, the information reached to the humanity throughout the globe in such a shortest possible time and the response from the heart of the people of the globe come in such a short of time, that gives feeling, it is a loss to one's family members, I am not alone, I am with the fraternity of the world civilization and there you play the most constructive role for humanity. This forum and this association have been playing a constructive role and must continue to play it for years and years to come. The global family identified at the end of the day. May be language is different, may be culture is different, may be the costumes are

different, but in real words of our ancient Rig Veda, we are one amongst all and we embrace together our civilization in search of truth, peace and humanity. This was taught by Lord Buddha, in this vast horizon. This was taught by Mahatma Gandhi in our national struggle and we continue to follow that in all forums. I don't like to take much of your time. There are a lot of other important issues to be dealt today. I wish your stay in India a very warm and I know the host organization shall make all possible efforts to make your stay enjoyable when you reach to Delhi. Tomorrow is our Budget session of Parliament and I am confident, this Budget Session, during its stay shall bring economic approach of our govt. and the success of our govt. We shall no more identify India as a nation of average growth rate of 5%. economic growth. It will show you we have crossed 8% and therefore, in the right words of Tony Blair, the PM of UK, in European Parliament, in Asia, China is not the destination alone, it is India and China and therefore, that moment you are in India, I desire you see everything which are right for India, see everything but still there are shortcomings, share every thing with our broadcasters, how they perform with dignity, the right that they enjoy through the constitution and in support the democratic and political system of this country, which is a living one. I am not jealous to anyone but I can say our democracy is giving us a lot. Our democracy is so powerful, so respected, so understanding that nobody can feel anything out of the system. This system is only respected come what may. And, therefore, with these words I thank you very much for inviting me to inaugurate and once again, I request our officials who are hosting it, to see that if there is any shortcomings, any lapses to conduct the conference are taken care of. I wish you good luck. I wish your organization to grow and grow, to contribute more, not only for the Commonwealth family but also for the global civilization.

Thank you

Keynote Address by Mr. S. K. Arora

Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Govt. of India

Hon'ble Minister for Information & Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs, Chairman of Prasar Bharati, Chief Executive Officer of Prasar Bharati, Secretary General of Commonwealth, Secretary General of Commonwealth Broadcasting Association, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen. Let me first of all add my own words of welcome to all of you to India and to Delhi and I hope that you will have a very fruitful, productive and enjoyable stay in India. While you are here, I am sure you will see the sights and sounds of India and also the technical quality and content of our broadcasting networks in India. We feel great pride in our broadcasting network and broadcasting companies and I am sure we will do our very best to showcase the latest and the state of the art in this field in India. Recent trends in the Indian broadcasting scene have shown tremendous growth both in terms of coverage as well as in terms of commercial parameters. Both, television and broadcasting, in particular Prasar Bharati, being the public broadcaster have almost covered the whole of the country 95 to 98 % in television and radio coverage in this country in terms of population and even the private channels have not been far behind. They have also extended their coverage and today, we have over hundred and seventy channels, private channels uplink from India. In addition, we have more than a hundred channels that are being fed into India from abroad. On the radio scene also while Prasar Bharati that is Doordarshan on the television side and Akashvani or All India Radio on the radio side have been the monopoly service providers for decades, but in the last 5-7 years, in the case of Television, from 1990 onwards and in the case of Radio, from 2000 onwards, private sector has started making their contribution and have proliferated considerably. The recent development of Radio has been phenomenal. We started in 2001 with just about 20 odd FM channels, FM radio channels in the private sector. We have recently modified our policy in 2005, liberalised it, made it more attractive, made it revenue sharing format which has enabled tremendous enthusiasm to be generated amongst the private entrepreneurs and I am very happy to share with you that in the month of Jan. last month, 2006, we have actually allocated 280 new private FM radio channels across 90 cities in the country and we have plans to take it forward to other cities in the country. This 90 is where certain amount of infrastructure

was available in terms of towers for co-location of these radio stations in Prasar Bharati, but we now propose to take it in the next phase to other cities where may be co-location facilities would be provided shortly and therefore, the number will enhance from 300 to may be much more. We have also introduced community radio stations and we have roughly 20 stations, which are now operational and many more are in the pipeline. We are also modifying our policy further liberalizing the community radio policy and we hope that with that there will be further expansion of community radio, really the way to go as far as communities to air their views and also participate in the community activities at the local level. From a policy making prospective I would like to share some of the recent developments in the Indian broadcasting scenario. As I mentioned the development of Television and radio, particularly television has been largely in the last 15 years in the private sector and this development has been although regulated to some extent channelized to some extent but has been largely unregulated. Technology, which rapidly changes, has always out past regulatory regimes and in India, we were liberal enough to permit on players to come in, whether Indian or foreign, to provide the necessary service for Indian viewers and listeners and that is why there was a huge proliferation of private television channels in India, particularly on the cables and satellite networks. But this also had its own toll in terms of adversarial commercial relations that developed between the broadcasters and the cable operators on the one side and the consumers feeling a little feels about not having enough options available to them in terms of ground coverage by cable operators. And therefore, government has been moving towards finding solutions to this problem of adversarial relationships and has made efforts to bring about regulations to overcome these difficulties and some of the highlights of those regulations have been in terms of the up-linking guidelines that we introduced in 2000, to cover broadcasting companies. We have recently introduced for foreign channels setup, being beamed into India for management and operation of such down-linking such companies in India and regulation of their content particularly. We have also looked at the role, which Prasar Bharati has been playing in the past several years. Starting from the position of pre eminence and monopoly, which Prasar Bharati enjoyed, both in Radio and Television from 1990 onwards, its role has become that of a competitor. And yet Prasar Bharati has continued to play in a very responsible and resilient manner. Its role, its primary function of providing Public service broadcasting to the nation and this role at no cost has been compromised in any way as far as India is

concerned and Prasar Bharati continues to be the main proponent of Public Service Broadcasting in our country. But technology private enterprise have brought in many platforms and as you know more and more convergence is taking place on various platforms, whether it is telecommunication platforms, mobile telephony, internet or cable operations and using all latest state of the art technologies for carrying content in different ways in different platforms to the consumers and to the viewers. And this has certainly led to a whole lot of soul searching in terms of defining different platforms in term from defining who is a broadcaster, who is a platform, who is a carrier, who is a content provider and we are struggling. And we propose to take all this forward through a proposed broadcasting regulation act that will codify all our guidelines; that we have evolved over the last 10 years or so and give them legislative backing and also refine and define various parameters; based on which broadcasting sector would be regulated in the times to come. It would also set up a broadcasting regulator, its own, as of now the telecom regulators has been assigned responsibility in India and we hope to have our own broadcasting regulator that will do both convergence of services in terms of regulation of the content as well as regulation of the carriage platforms which are related to broadcasting sector. Where there is no broadcasting involved then there would be obviously the telecom regulator that will take care of that and we want to differentiate quite clearly when content is carried on a platform and who will regulate that content and if the platform alone is different than the content regulators will regulate the content part irrespective of the platform on which it is carried. So we are trying to distinguish and hopefully in the legislation that we proposed to bring out, this distinction would be highlighted and would be defined quite adequately. We also tend, have also looked at content from a more liberal perspective than is traditionally understood. In India we have been very open, India is a very open society and an open economy and everyone is welcome. Whether it is in terms of foreign investment or in terms of foreign products, including broadcasting products, including content. Although we have limited obligations under the world trade services agreement, our autonomous regulations go far beyond our international obligations and almost very little restriction has been placed on the import of content into our country. And yet we find that our content regulation have been extremely liberal and we propose to take this freedom of expression even further by introducing legislation which would include mechanisms for self regulation and self certification by the broadcasting industry. And because it is logistically almost

impossible for doing any preview and pre-certification of broadcasting content, we hope to enable the broadcasters to do self certification of their own content and of course failing which there would be the broadcasting regulator who would take appropriate action. And for this, we are working out an arrangement, a very detailed self regulatory content code which will define how the self regulation process should take place within the industry itself and we are developing this code under the edges of the industry itself. They are designing the code, and government will then interact with them to finalize that code. So it is a highly interactive and iterative process that government is engaged in with the industry to develop its own self regulatory content code. Coming back to the role of Prasar Bharati, there has been certain amount of convergence even in the roles played on public sector broadcasting by the Prasar Bharati which is essentially a public service broadcaster and the private channels of land. More and more channels have begun to do public service messaging, social messaging. At the same time, Prasar Bharati continues to be pre-eminent and dominant in this area. We are also contemplating whether we should formalize this arrangement and also introduce public service broadcasting obligations which would be relevant for not only Prasar Bharati but also would be applicable to the private industry and then together. The role of Prasar Bharati not only would get mitigated but there would be greater convergence in terms of providing good quality content and covering those areas of content which may not be commercially always viable through this public service broadcasting obligations. In the end, I would like to state only one thing that in our country, not only we are having a very liberal approach but we continue to have an extremely positive and interactive association with the broadcasting industry, whether it is in the public sector or in the private sector and the government is committed to continue this process of interaction and iterative consultative process of legislation in our country which will benefit every one. Finally let me once again thank the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association and particularly the Prasar Bharati, that is hosting this year to have given me this opportunity to come and participate in the inaugural function and share my views with you. Thank you very much and I wish the conference all success. (clapping)

