

# 'Prasar Bharati flouted norms to award TV rights'

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**EXCLUSIVE**

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**NEW DELHI:** The Central Vigilance Commission has found serious irregularities in awarding telecast rights and contracts by public broadcaster Prasar Bharati during the last over two years.

Prasar Bharati Corporation is a state-run company that governs both Doordarshan and All India Radio.

The commission, which was ordered to probe the charges by the Delhi High Court in July, found that most financial irregularities were committed in Mumbai.

Vigilance commissioner Sudhir Kumar told the *Hindustan Times*, "The procedures adopted in most cases were truly outrageous and arbitrary. It should call for a criminal investigation."

The charges came to fore in January this year when some Prasar Bharati Board members charged that the corporation was being run in "an unprofessional manner".

Later, the Centre for Public Interest Litigation (CPIL), an NGO, filed a PIL in the high court alleging financial mismanagement in Prasar Bharati.

In July, the high court ordered the CVC to probe the charges. The findings can help the Information and Broadcasting Ministry in deciding on the proposed disbanding of the Prasar Bharati Board.

A senior I&B Ministry offi-

**CENTRAL VIGILANCE COMMISSION MEMBER SAYS BROADCASTER'S STYLE OF FUNCTIONING CALLS FOR CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION**

cial, who did not wish to be identified, said, "Once the CVC report comes, the final action will start." The CVC is likely to submit a status report to the high court in the next few weeks.

"The methodology adopted by Prasar Bharati for awarding contracts and telecast rights could neither be found in the board's laid down financial rules, nor in the CVC guidelines," said Kumar, a CVC member.

Claiming that there were indications of clear substitution of records, he said, "There is evidence of forging and changing the records and also clear over-writing."

During the hearing of the PIL in the high court, the CPIL accused the Prasar Bharati's chief executive officer B.S. Lalli of refusing internal audit although the public broadcasters had awarded several bids in the run-up to the 2010 Commonwealth Games.

But Lalli (62), said, "I don't know about the CVC findings as the report has not yet come. The allegations are not against any individual. I was myself in favour of the CVC inquiry. We said so when the matter came up in the Supreme Court."

Lalli, however, said there were several structural matters and many contours to the issue.