

August 7th, 2013

Mr. Wasi Ahamad
Advisor (B&CS)
Telecom Regulatory Authority of India
Mahanagar, Doorsanchar Bhawan
Jawahar Lal Nehru Marg
New Delhi - 110002

Dear Sir,

Greetings.

MM TV Ltd. broadcasts Manorama News, Kerala's leading News and Current Affairs television channel and Mazhavil Manorama, a general entertainment television channel.

MM TV Ltd. is a subsidiary of Malayala Manorama, a 125-year old media company that publishes Malayala Manorama, India's third largest selling newspaper, The Week, India's No.1 newsmagazine and more than forty publications.

We, at MM TV Ltd. are deeply disturbed by the government's proposal to increase foreign direct investment in news and current affairs television channels from the current 26% to 49%.

We are not in favour of this proposal of the government. Even our former Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was not for allowing foreign control of Indian Media. Foreign Direct Investment in Media should not be treated on par with other Industries.

Media is a sensitive area and we have seen from history that foreign powers can quickly change the Nations mood by controlling the media. It took us nearly two centuries to come out of the colonial rule. The Indian struggle against them is global history.

Today, there is no lack of access to capital for expansion and growth in India. Hence there is no requirement for Foreign Investment in Media. Banks and Indian origin funds are more than willing to invest in Media.

The 26% limit that has been fixed earlier has hardly ever been used by Television News media companies and this shows that there is absolutely no need to revise this to 49%.

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It will not be wise for us to allow different foreign nationals to control the media in India. They will have no interest in our country's well-being, its secular fabric and its diversities in religion, traditions and customs. Foreigners are only interested in the financial angle leading to making profits at all costs.

In the recent past, we have seen how foreigners can change the social fabric of the country. The phone tapping issue is a current example in Britain. Almost all countries have restrictions on News Media to protect their sovereignty and vibrant democracy. USA, Canada, South America, Asia and most countries in Europe, do not allow Foreign Investment in News Media.

This is done to protect the country's interest. Most countries do not allow any foreign investment in News and Current Affairs Television Channels and it is usually 20% or less in the few countries that allow.

For example, in the United States, one has to be a citizen to own a broadcast network.

We disagree that proper monitoring and regulation of content code will make Television News Channels compliant and sensitive to the National Fabric. Television News is live and there are no content advisories that can stop dissemination of news. There is no point pulling up channels once the damage is done. It is imperative that we protect the secular fabric and democracy of India.

In addition, the influence of Foreign powers will happen over a period of time once and gradually their influence will prevail over India.

National Security is paramount in India. At times of national crisis only Indian-owned and operated Media will look at India's interest. We should not handover our media to a colonial company on a platter.

Be it any media platform, to increase the current permitted equity from 26% to 49% in news and current affairs is a move that is to be avoided in the best interest of our country.

Regards,

Yours Sincerely,


Jayant Mammen Mathew
Director