I&B Ministry Vs PrasarBharati

Why in news?

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Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Ministry has blocked funds meant for the salaries of the public broadcaster's employees.

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What is the rift about?

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- PrasarBharati runs Doordarshan and All India Radio and has a staff strength of about 5,000.
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- I&B ministry has not released funds for employees' salaries for two months now January and February 2018.
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- The amount of salaries totals about Rs400 crore.
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- The amount has been paid out of internal and extra budgetary resources of the public broadcaster.
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What is the reason for the rift?

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- **From Government's side -**PrasarBharati has refused to pay a fee of Rs 2.92 crore to a private firm, to which the National Film Development Corporation had outsourced live coverage of an event.
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- PrasarBharati had blocked proposals for appointments and brushed aside a communication from the ministry calling for retrenchments.
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- The sticking point was a ministry proposal to appoint a serving IAS officer as a full-time Board member through the Appointments Committee of the

Cabinet.
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- **From PrasarBharati's side -**Earlier, PrasarBharati had refused to terminate contractual employees of the broadcaster on I&B ministry's demand, calling it a "direct attack on the autonomy of the organisation".
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- PrasarBharati was repeatedly asked to let go of the contractual employees, which is the prerogative of the organisation not the ministry.
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- I&B ministry also threatens the organization that funds will be blocked if the instructions are not followed.
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What is the government's stand on the recent rift?

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- I&B ministry claims that PrasarBharati is as much bound by general financial rules of the government of India as any other ministry or organization receiving grants-in-aid from the government.
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- As per the provision of general financial rules, any autonomous organization receiving grants-in-aid must sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the ministry.
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- It clearly brings out the physical and financial targets with timelines for activities to be done by utilising the said grant during that financial year.
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- Government also states that irrespective of repeated reminders from the ministry, no MoU has been signed by PrasarBharati.
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Source: Live mint, Indian Express

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