

**Zia Haq, Hindustan Times**

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## Independent selectors to pick DD content

Doordarshan may have long lost its status of being a national sensation, but it is gingerly taking some steps towards reforms right where it matters: Content. The national entertainment channel is switching to a new system of selecting programmes to have an independent panel pick content and make producers accountable for television ratings — a move aimed at changing Doordarshan's image of being a stodgy state-run broadcaster.

“It's an independent panel that selects the content and monitors it and doesn't report to anyone,” minister of state for information and broadcasting Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore told HT.

In the 80s, as a monopoly, Doordarshan nurtured a whole new generation of film-makers and actors, such as Shah Rukh Khan. Its decline over the years is largely attributed to its inability to move with the times as well as an entrenched culture of nepotism.

Rathore said the idea of having an independent panel was to end the “era of recommendations” under which producers got chosen.

The panel will have a term of one year and will determine if a particular content, including daily soaps, meets the projected television ratings points (TRP). “If it meets the projected TRP, he (producer) gets a bonus, that's an incentive for him to keep the content quality high, if it doesn't meet, he gets penalised,” Rathore said. A TRP is a household-based sample survey to measure a TV programme's popularity.

Despite Doordarshan's frequent on-air flubs and some disastrous anchoring of late, especially at DD News, Rathore robustly sought to defend the role of Doordarshan as the national broadcaster. “DD has the onus of being a public broadcaster, no other channel can handle what Doordarshan does, it promotes regional languages.

“The compensation for producers of daily soaps has been hiked from `3 lakh to `8 lakh,” Rathore said.

Alongside, the ministry is also working on a process to have an objective internal assessment of the independent panel's competence.

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