

President looks forward to greater flow of tax information after DTAA

Just back from Switzerland, President Pratibha Patil says she looks forward to a greater exchange of information on tax-related issues with that country.

"Definitely. The Agreement (Amending Protocol to Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement) will further facilitate the flow of information once it comes into force," Patil says on the pact reached between two countries earlier this year.

The President, who discussed the Agreement with Swiss authorities during her meeting, said the Central Board for Direct Taxes will be able to seek information relating to tax avoidance once it comes into force.

"The agreement is between two governments. After the entry into force of the protocol, the CBDT, the competent authority on our side would be able to ask its counterpart agency for information relating to tax avoidance and tax-evasion.

"The CBDT would have to provide information as required by the protocol," she told PTI on board the Air India One aircraft on her way back from Austria on Friday.

In Austria, her counterpart Heinz Fischer talked about the International Anti-Corruption Academy.

Asked if Austria raised the issue motivated by a feeling that corruption was a big issue back home, Patil said, "I do not think so. This is a new academy which has been set up in Austria by Austria-based United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and few other stakeholders."

Patil said the Academy, set up in March 8, 2011 aims to function as an independent centre of excellence in the field of anti-corruption education, training, networking and cooperation, as well as academic research.

"Fischer would like to highlight the importance of this new institute, for which Austria is the host and to encourage countries including India to join so as to increase membership," she said.

"However, the proceedings pursuant to such notices have been conducted internally within the Ministry and never has been in the nature of adjudication. Be that as it may, certain other broadcasters have complied with directions issued by the Ministry for running apologies and even shutting down their channels for certain periods of time," the Association said in its statement.

"To now retrospectively use such proceedings to deny permission to broadcast for future is wholly arbitrary, unfair, illegal and unconstitutional," it added.

The NBA described the proposed modification of the Uplinking and Downlinking guidelines as a "direct assault" on the self-regulatory regime put in place by broadcasters, which has been encouraged and recognised by the I&B Ministry.

"Such proposed step is wholly retrograde and places broadcasters at the arbitrary mercy of the Ministry and is therefore a violation of the constitutional right to freedom of speech and expression and will not be countenanced by the NBA," it said.

Expressing anguish at this step, the NBA urged the government to "urgently review the regressive decision" which would be "anathema to the constitutional framework of our country".

The Association is seeking an appointment with Information and Broadcasting Minister Ambika Soni to explain and clarify its concerns.

(PTI)