

'UPA Not Hesitant on Black Money Issue'

*Information and Broadcasting Minister **Ambika Soni** in conversation with Editorial Director **Prabhu Chawla** on ETV's Sachi Baat.*

What's the need for a new media GoM (group of ministers) when you're running the ministry efficiently?

These days the government's scope of work has increased so much that it is very hard for one person to have information of all the programmes happening in its ambit.

Was it formed because the government faced a severe Opposition attack, and big ministers had to come together?

The GoM was not a reactive step because of news regarding Lokpal or the 2G issue, nor was it constituted in a hurry. Hence it cannot be termed a knee-jerk reaction.

Issues concerning black money, 2G, are being raised. But Pranab Mukherjee does not have the financial details. Why doesn't he speak?

Pranab Mukherjee addressed a press conference two or three months ago, giving exhaustive information on black money. I was present too.

You say a lot of work has been done on black money. Five committees have been formed, every second week some announcements are made regarding them, without any tangible results.

We have formed three committees to look into the issue. We have signed bilateral MoU's with many countries all over the world regarding taxation and information, and vice versa.

Any action being taken against anyone?

Work is happening, but we don't have the permission to give out information



We have formed three committees to look into black money, and signed MoU's with many nations on taxation

yet. When you sign a bilateral agreement with a country, they also have pre-conditions to be adhered to.

Any big names that are being investigated?

The finance minister has said that some foreign governments have some names. The court knows it.

In your view, should the Prime Minister be in the ambit of the Lokpal?

I am a minister in the Union Cabinet; my individual views have no relevance.

Now that Baba Ramdev is going on hunger strike, will you form a new committee to placate him?

I cannot stop him from sitting on a hunger strike. It is not as if the government is hesitant or reluctant to tackle

the vexing issue of black money. UPA II under Dr Manmohan Singh's leadership has taken many important steps. Many committees have been formed to tackle the issue of black money.

Recently, your chief ministerial candidate in Punjab, Captain Amrinder Singh, said that Devender Pal Singh Bhullar should not be given capital punishment, that will not solve any problems.

Today there is a worldwide debate on capital punishment. In our country also the debate is on. He simply said that he is personally against capital punishment.

Then the same standard applies to Afzal Guru. In Bhullar's case, the court has announced its verdict, and his mercy petition rejected. Shouldn't the court's sentence be obeyed?

Yes, the law of the land says so; if the mercy petition is rejected then capital punishment cannot be commuted.

You said 700 channels are operating in the

country today. In the past two years more than 70 channels were given approvals by your ministry. It seems you have a very liberal approach towards granting TV permits.

Our policy is open; the media has been a great beneficiary of this policy. When I took charge I announced the present requirements for companies who seek to start a new channel, concerning turnover, net capital and experience of companies.

Hence you will not permit new channels until a new policy is ready.

Yes. Until the new policy is decided, no new channels will be permitted to start operations.