

REPORT

INTRODUCTORY

Direct to Home (DTH) telecast refers to direct distribution of Television programmes/channels to the receiving subscribers home in high-frequency Ku-Band, without routing through a cable operator, employing a small dish antenna and a set top box. DTH telecast in Ku-Band, is claimed to be a state of the art technology capable of offering excellent quality of transmission, greater choice to the consumer, and is stated to be suitable for remote and border areas. It is also capable of providing an important communication infrastructure for many value-added services, capable of fulfilling the educational, information and entertainment needs of the people.

2. In 1997 when a private TV company announced its plans to introduce DTH in India, the Government did not permit the same on the ground of security and morality and decided to ban DTH telecast by prohibiting transmission or reception of signals in Ku-band.

3. On 16 July, 1997 through a notification under the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933, the Ministry of Communications effectively banned DTH in the country, by prohibiting establishment, maintenance, working, possession of or dealing in equipment capable of receiving signals in frequency bands above 4800 MHz (which includes Ku-band).

4. In 1999, the matter was revived and the Government appointed a Group of Ministers (GoM) headed by the Home Minister to consider issues relating to DTH telecast. The GoM could not, however, submit its recommendations due to intervening general election. The matter was taken up again for consideration when the Government re-constituted GoM, again headed by the Home Minister in January, 2000.

5. This GoM came to the conclusion that the security and morality concerns could be taken care of in an assured manner and these did not pose any danger and proposed to allow the same subject to certain conditions:-

- (i) Licence for DTH to Indian companies with majority shareholding by Indians and with Indian management control.
- (ii) Uplinking for DTH to be done necessarily through earth station to be located in India.
- (iii) Requiring DTH licensee to maintain record of uplinked programmes for 90 days so as to be available for scrutiny if needed.

6. The GoM noted that transmission in Ku-band offered advantages for TV broadcasting by way of enhanced quality and also that DTH would allow internet and e-mail services (also data transfer) to population all over the country. It was felt that these were large advantages of which the country should not be deprived. The GoM, therefore, recommended opening up of Ku-band for TV and DTH transmission.

7. The Cabinet in its meeting on 2 November, 2000 approved the recommendations of the GoM. Consequently, the prohibition on the reception and distribution of television signals in Ku-band was withdrawn by the Government vide notification No. GSR 18(E) dated 9th January, 2001 of the DoT. The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, vide its Order No. 8/1/99-PCB (Vol-II) dated 15 March, 2001, issued detailed guidelines for DTH telecast in the country, without any prior discussion in Parliament.

8. In view of the apparent concerns related to security and morality in DTH telecast, emanating from high frequency applications, the issue has gathered sizeable attention in the country. It is in this backdrop that the Committee, decided to take up this subject for examination. The Committee in this regard took evidence of Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Ministry of Home Affairs and Department of Space.

DTH TELECAST TECHNOLOGY AND ITS SALIENT FEATURES

9. The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting in reply to a query by the Committee has stated that DTH telecast has become possible due to development in technology which allows broadcast signals from satellite in higher frequency band called 'Ku-band' to be received by an antenna of about 45 cm., in diameter which can be placed on top of a TV set at the receiving subscriber's home without routing through a cable operator.

10. Clarifying the point further, a representative of the Ministry stated during evidence before the Committee that the operating frequency of DTH telecast is in Ku-Band, which operates between 10.7 GHz and 18 GHz. This high frequency permits digitisation, compression and high quality viewing, and it has the capacity of sending signals directly to the subscribers' premises without having to pass through the intermediaries. DTH has a provision for a subscriber management system so that there could be a data base with the service provider about the number of people viewing each channel at any given point of time.

11. It has been stated that DTH can also provide a broad band backbone for convergence of broadcasting, telecommunication and multimedia services, without waiting for high quality terrestrial infrastructure to develop. It can facilitate internet and internet supported value added services such as data casting, e-commerce, interactive multimedia services etc. and thus DTH offers immense opportunities to both broadcasters and viewers.

12. It was further informed that the DTH system offers an alternative to the existing operations of cable television networks in the country, wherein the subscribers have no choice and subscription rates are fixed arbitrarily by cable service providers, in almost an area-specific, monopolistic distribution system. It has been contended that it will be ideally suited for sparsely populated areas (rural/remote areas and small towns) since it is not dependent on terrestrial infrastructure and that the DTH system will provide subscribers a bouquet of channels to chose from and subscribers will pay for what they chose to watch.

DTH GUIDELINES

13. The Committee desired to know about the salient features of the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, for regulating DTH telecast in the country. In a Note, it was replied that the guidelines which also inter-alia contained the following stipulations:

(i) **Eligibility criteria:**

- (a) Applicant company to be Indian company under the Indian Companies Act.
- (b) Total foreign equity holding (FDI/NRI/OCB/FII) not to exceed 49 per cent

- (c) FDI component of foreign equity not to exceed 20 per cent
- (d) Applicant company to have Indian Management Control with majority representatives on the Board and CEO being a resident Indian.
- (e) Broadcasting companies or/and Cable Networking Companies shall not collectively be eligible to own more than 20 per cent equity of the applicant company.

(ii) **OTHER CONDITIONS**

- (a) No restriction on the number of DTH licences.
- (b) Licences valid for 10 years and non-transferable.
- (c) Licencees to set up earth stations in India; and adhere to programme and advertising codes; provide fair and non-discriminatory access to various content providers; carry channels of Prasar Bharati on most favourable terms etc.
- (d) Use open Architecture (Non- Proprietary) Set Top Box.
- (e) Subscribers' interest to be ensured by the licensee through Conditional Access System (CAS) which should be compatible with open Architecture Set Top Box.

(iii) **FINANCIAL:**

- (a) Non-refundable entry fee of Rs.10 Crore.
- (b) Bank guarantee of Rs. 40 crore after clearance of Wireless Planning and Co-ordination Wing (WPC) and Standing Advisory Committee on Frequency Allocation (SACFA).
- (c) Pay an annual fee equivalent to 10 per cent of gross revenue, within one month of end of every financial year.
- (d) Pay other licence fee and royalty for spectrum used.

14. The Committee enquired about the safe-guards which had been stated to be incorporated into the guidelines to address to the concerns on security and morality. In reply, the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting in a note has submitted as follows:-

- (a) The applicant company to be an Indian company having Indian Management control.
- (b) The application for licence will be processed after obtaining the security clearance from the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- (c) Licence will be liable for termination if facility or service is used for anti national activities.
- (d) Access to all facilities, to licensor or their authorised representatives, to be provided by licensee.
- (e) Government can take over the entire service in the interest of national security.
- (f) Requirement that all foreign personnel deployed shall obtain security clearance.
- (g) Licensee shall not carry any channel prohibited by Ministry of Information & Broadcasting.
- (h) The facilities shall not be used for transmitting any objectionable or obscene content.
- (i) The licensor has the right to prohibit the transmission or reception of programme in the interest of national security or the in the event of emergency/war etc.
- (j) The programme of DTH channel will adhere to programme Code and Advertisement Code prescribed.
- (k) The licensee shall set up earth station in India.
- (l) Requirement to maintain recording of programmes and advertisement for a period of 90 days.

15. The Committee desired to know why a ban was imposed on DTH initially. In reply, the Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting stated that the Government was conscious that it did not have comprehensive regulation of broadcasting, except for the Cable TV act, and also the system lends itself as a natural monopoly or oligopoly and therefore there was need to move cautiously that is why a restriction had been imposed.

16. When the Committee asked about the reasons to formulate guidelines to regulate DTH telecast in the country and whether it had received any specific request to set up DTH services, the Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting stated that there was a request for permission to provide DTH services long back. In fact STAR wanted to provide the service. But, it was decided that it would result in the creation of a monopoly without Government having framed any regulations. Therefore, Government thought that if DTH services were allowed without any prior policy decision, it would provide a very powerful instrument into the hands of the service provider. A representative of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, further added that since there was a demand for DTH broadcast pending for the last two or three years, Government thought of framing guidelines as there is no statutory provision to control the same.

17. The Committee pointed out that the guidelines has stipulated stringent conditions viz., CEO of the DTH company should be a resident Indian, the DTH company is required to be Indian, there are restrictions on FDI component, FDI/NRI/OCB/FII investment should not exceed 49 per cent etc and desired to know why such stringent stipulations have been made, and what apprehensions were perceived by the Government in DTH telecast. The Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, in evidence stated that the country did not have any statutory regulator or a legislation governing Broadcasting and that is the reason for wording the guidelines so cautiously.

18. Article 9.1 of the Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting provides as under:

Article 9.1 The Licensor reserves the right to take over the entire services and networks of the Licensee or revoke/cancel/suspend the License in the interest of national security or in the event of an emergency/war or low intensity conflict or similar type of situations. Further, the Licensor reserves the right to direct the Licensee to close down the service if implications of security so requires. Any specific order or direction from the Government

issued in this regard shall be strictly complied with by the Licensee.

The Committee pointed out that licences cannot be revoked or cancelled merely by providing for it in the guidelines and there must be legal frame work for it and enquired how the Ministry proposed to implement these guidelines. The Secretary, Ministry of I&B, admitted that it would be a complex matter, however, a representative of the Ministry added that once the licence is given under certain terms and conditions, breach of any condition, amounts to breach of the term of license. That becomes breach of contract itself. In the absence of any law, this is what could have been done for the regulation purpose.

19. On being asked whether, take over would mean forfeiture or confiscation, it was clarified that takeover would be for the purpose of management. It was added, that it would only be for equipment. The Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting further elaborated that the idea of having this provision was that in case a service provider through some subterfuge tried to violate the licence provision, at least the Government could stop him from broadcasting signals or selling his unit.

20. The Committee pointed out that anything which dealt with the right to information and personal liberties could not be taken over by the Government unless sanctioned by law. The management of industrial establishments could be taken over under the law but some compensation has to be paid; this is clearly laid down in the Constitution so the Committee asked how the Government proposes to take over a broadcasting company through a mere guideline in the absence of any law. In reply, representative of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting stated that since these terms and conditions are part of the licence, any breach of licence is a breach of the contract.

21. In view of the aforementioned lacuna i.e., taking over in the absence of any legal framework, the Committee enquired how compliance of the guidelines would be ensured from hundreds of channels to be broadcast on DTH and whether it would be possible to control beaming. Secretary, I&B replied that control would be exercised through the DTH platform. The Secretary added that some of the issues raised are intended to be addressed through the Convergence Bill.

22. The Committee then asked, in case a particular channel was offending or carrying objectionable content how could the same be taken off. The Secretary, replied that the DTH Guidelines and the Convergence Bill would have provisions in this regard.

23. To a specific query on the grievance redressal against DTH telecast since it would be a private enterprise, it has been replied that once the Convergence Bill is enacted, a regulator would come into existence.

24. The Committee enquired whether it would be desirable to first have the legal framework and then permit DTH. The Secretary stated that at one stage the view was not to permit DTH until the law was enacted.

25. The Committee asked then why there was the hurry to introduce DTH when legal framework has not been put in place. The Secretary, I&B stated that the operation itself would provide the experience on the basis of which the law could be formulated.

26. The Committee asked why the Government did not take Parliament into confidence before announcing its decision to allow DTH telecast, the Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting replied that the Cabinet decision was taken in November, 2000 and at that time the Parliament was not in session.

SECURITY AND MORALITY RELATED ISSUES

27. In the course of evidence the Committee pointed out that from the guidelines issued for DTH telecast, it appeared that there was a considerable security angle involved in the commencement of DTH services. In this context, the Committee desired to know about the threat perception of the Government. A representative of the Ministry of Home Affairs stated that the Communication and Broadcasting technologies have made enormous strides in recent times, and their impact is being felt all over the country. While providing access to improved communication and information facilities, misuse of these by certain vested interests always remained a possibility. The internal security scenario of the country is such that it faces constant threats from cross border terrorism, hostile foreign intelligence agencies, and the activities of various anti-national elements. Hence, the security implications of various new technologies are increasingly becoming a matter of concern. He further

added that the draft licence agreement prepared by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, was examined by the Ministry of Home Affairs from the security angle and various terms and conditions were studied to ensure that security considerations were adequately take care of.

28. In reply to a query by the Committee about the misuse that DTH Telecast could be put to, the representative of the Ministry of Home Affairs submitted that this facility could be misused for conveying wrong information or wrong propaganda.

29. To a specific query, whether it was possible to send any message, signal, or any other information directly to a DTH subscriber's home, the Secretary, I&B stated that when full convergence comes, it could be possible. He explained that, convergence meant broadcasting with individual control and as technology developed, such a situation would become possible.

30. To another query about the possibility of remotely controlling the telecast on DTH, with designs to create opinion against our national interest, it has been stated that technologically it could be possible but cost prohibitive and that the only way to meet the problem, would be to take action after the telecast, provided it could be detected by the Government.

31. The Committee enquired about the safeguards built against carrying other modes of communications viz. voice, fax, data and internet etc., through DTH and in reply, it was stated that for other modes of communications, it has been provided in the Licence Agreement that DTH facility shall not be used, unless specific licence for these value added services is obtained from the competent authority. It was added that if permitted to operate such services, monitoring of these would be done by the security agencies under the relevant laws.

32. To another specific query about interception of undesirable content and stopping its telecast simultaneously, the representative stated that it would not be possible to contemporaneously monitor the same.

33. The Committee enquired how 250 channels proposed to be telecast on DTH would be monitored. In reply, the Secretary, I&B stated in evidence that Ministry has a very small and old facility for monitoring foreign broadcasting therefore it is not having adequate monitoring facility. The question of monitoring private sector

broadcasting never arose because such broadcasting was not earlier allowed. But now, Ministry has to think about the same. He further added that in India there is no control over down-linking; people could beam programmes from abroad which could be down linked for redistribution subject to adherence to the Programme and Advertisement codes. Clarifying the position further in reply to a query by the Committee, he stated that some countries have control over downlinking of the programmes. They keep monitoring them. Whenever there is any violation, it can be discovered.

34. The Committee asked when the country is not prepared to properly monitor DTH services, then why it has been decided to allow it; and whether technology has started dictating policies. A representative of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting stated that it is not certain whether the existing technology will ever permit a kind of control and monitoring that will be fool proof from security concerns and that whatever was feasible has been provided in the guidelines.

COMMERCIAL ASPECTS:

35. Asked about the number of operators which the Ministry expected to enter the DTH sector, the Secretary, I&B stated that it would be difficult to hazard a guess; however on the basis of global experience it was estimated that it could be only one player, and not more than two.

36. The Committee desired to know about the initial investment required for establishing a DTH telecast network in the country. Ministry of Information & Broadcasting through a written note informed that according to an estimate prepared by Prasar Bharati a DTH operator was required to make an investment of Rs.700 crore for a bouquet of 200 channels, which includes Rs.450 crore for hardware, building and licence fees and approx. Rs.250 crore for setting 1,000 subscriber management centres across the country. In addition there could be large investment on STBs to be installed at the subscribers' premises.

37. The Committee enquired about the number of Channels which could be brought on a DTH platform. In reply, the Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting stated that theoretically DTH could have even 250 channels. He further

apprised that there could be some free to air channels and some pay channels, which would come with a basic price.

38. Article 7.7 of the Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting provides as under:-

Article 7.7 The Licensee shall adhere to any guidelines/regulations which may be laid down by the Licensor in the interest of consumer such as pricing of bouquet(s) or tier(s) of channels etc.

In this context, the Committee desired to know the range of charges, which could be levied by the DTH service provider. In reply, the Secretary, I&B stated that it would be difficult to give an estimate. A lot would depend on market forces, and also the system of regulation. Since technology has been changing fast, different countries are experimenting with different types of regulations, and this has been a matter of debate.

39. The Committee enquired whether it should not be a matter of paramount concern as to how a new technology would benefit or affect a common man, the Secretary, I&B stated that what has been done is to provide an initial beginning that will allow people to decide, depending on their assessment of cost and benefit. He further added that licencing has been introduced only to impart some degree of regulation.

40. On being asked about the steps the Government contemplated to take to ensure accessibility of DTH telecast to the common citizens who are not in a position to install costly equipment necessary for getting DTH transmission, the Ministry in a note have stated that world wide experience has been that DTH system generally targeted niche audience. It is expected that in the initial stages only persons having higher disposable income will go for DTH in preference to Cable Television. In line with the experience of other countries, to exploit the full potential of DTH services, it is expected that the DTH operator will subsidize the cost of the hardware to the consumers to increase viewership.

41. The Committee enquired about the number of subscribers that DTH telecast would attract. In reply, it has been stated that there are 70 million TV households and

30 million Cable connections and as per studies, DTH could have a niche market of 3 million, i.e., one tenth of the Cable homes.

42. The Committee has been further informed that only one application for obtaining licence for starting DTH platform has been received so far which is being processed.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

43. The Committee desired to know about the initiative being pursued by the Government for exploring the possibilities of DTH telecast services in the country. The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting in a note has submitted that Prasar Bharati has proposed to earmark a sum of Rs.10 crore in the 10th Plan for carrying out experimental studies on DTH. Prasar Bharati intends to experiment transmission of some of its Satellite Channels in Ku-band on free to air basis. This experiment is being tried out as an alternative technology option to provide coverage to hitherto uncovered regions, specially in the fringes, in hilly and sparsely populated areas. For this purpose, a sum of Rs.85 crore has been approved in the Annual Plan 2002-2003. After successful trial and experimentation, it will be replicated in other areas as well depending upon the available resources.

44. **The Committee notes that to keep pace with rapidly changing technology, economic liberalisation, globalisation and specific needs of certain areas of the country, Government permitted introduction of Direct to Home (DTH) transmission by satellite uplinking by private television broadcasters from the Indian soil and digitisation of transmission. DTH is stated to be a powerful media with superior technology which offers an alternative for distribution and reception of television programmes both to the programme provider as well as to the consumer. The Committee understands that DTH TV service is provided through high frequency Ku-band which requires a small dish antenna and a decoder/set top box. Earlier, introduction of DTH telecast was considered in 1997 when a private TV company announced its plans to introduce it in India. At that time, the Government felt that DTH telecast would raise serious questions about security and morality and therefore, decided not to allow it, by prohibiting transmission or reception of signals in Ku-band. In pursuance of the**

aforesaid decision, the erstwhile Ministry of Communications banned DTH telecast in July, 1997 through a notification. In 1999, the issue was revived and a Group of Ministers (GoM) was constituted to look into it. However, GoM could not submit its recommendations due to general election. After the election, another GoM was appointed in January, 2000 to consider the issue, which concluded that security and morality concern did not pose any danger and could be taken care of in an assured manner by insisting on a licence for DTH, permitting only Indian Companies to provide DTH services in which majority shareholding is held by Indians and that management control rests with Indians. Uplinking for DTH was prescribed through earth stations located in India and required DTH licensee to maintain records of programmes uplinked for 90 days so as to be available for scrutiny, if needed. In view of these recommendations, the Cabinet considered and approved introduction of DTH services on 2 November, 2000. Suitable safeguards are reportedly provided in the guidelines so as to take care of the concerns relating to national security, morality and vertical monopoly in distribution and broadcasting of television services.

45. The Committee is deeply concerned to note that the Government allowed telecast of Direct to Home services all of a sudden without any indepth study though DTH is considered to be a very powerful media. Further, it was allowed for private telecasters much before formulating a regulatory framework even though on an earlier occasion Government had not allowed it, for want of comprehensive regulatory framework. Propriety demanded providing opportunity to Parliament to discuss such an important issue. Even the decision to allow DTH was announced outside the Parliament. The Committee deprecates the unseemly and unnecessary hurry shown in the matter without getting any study done about the viewership, cost, subscription rates etc., particularly when there was only one contender for the licence. Even though the matter was under consideration for three years, no spade work worth the name was done. The Committee further notes that the detailed guidelines as formulated by the Government for DTH telecast, incorporate stringent provisions against violation of any terms and conditions of the licence, which

include monetary penalties and even cancellation of license. The guidelines also provide for taking over of the entire network of DTH service in case of emergency and national security. The Committee is at loss to understand how Government can take over a service when no law or procedure has been laid down for the same. The guidelines are thus ambiguous and require to be made enforceable through adequate legal framework, which is absent now. The Committee feels that when operations of DTH telecast start, there will be unrestricted availability of TV channels in the country. However, it is difficult to visualise at this stage what long term "benefits" or impact it will accrue to or have on the people.

46. The Committee is not able to accept the Government's contention that the matter was not brought before Parliament/Parliamentary Committee as the Parliament was not in session when decision was taken to allow DTH. There were sessions of Parliament between the periods of submitting report by GoM and its acceptance by the Cabinet. The Committee is of the opinion that if the Government was really interested in having the opinion of Parliament on the vital issue, it could have sought the views at least of this Committee which consists of representatives of different section of Parliament. The Committee feels that the Government could have even introduced a bill on DTH in either House as the issue is very sensitive and agitating. The Committee feels that validity period of ten years for License is an unusually long period. The Committee also does not appreciate regulation of such a highly sensitive and powerful media merely through administrative orders and not by legislation. Such ambiguities and lacunae could be overcome easily if Government had decided to place the matter before Parliament, specially as there was no emergency and significantly, no licence has been issued till date and there has been only one applicant so far. The Committee urges the Government to take Parliament into confidence over such an important matter, and consider bringing about a comprehensive legislation covering all aspects of DTH.

47. The Committee finds it is significant to note that certain provisions in the guidelines will take effect only on the enactment of the proposed

Communication Convergence Bill. Therefore, the Committee feels that before allowing DTH telecast, the Government should have not only framed the requisite law as admitted by the Secretary, I&B during evidence but also waited till the enactment of the Communication Convergence Bill (on which the Committee has submitted its Report on 20 November, 2002 in Lok Sabha and on 21 November, 2002 in Rajya Sabha).

48. The Committee notes with concern that the terms and conditions provided under various Articles which are of minor nature and violation thereof empowers the Government to take severe action, viz. cancellation, revocation, suspension of a licence or taking over service etc. The Committee apprehends that in the absence of detailed regulations the Licensor can impose arbitrarily any penalty even for minor omissions. Therefore, the Committee recommends that irregularities should be classified under heads major and minor with appropriate legal consequences.

49. The Committee shares the apprehensions of the Government on security and morality related issues emanating from DTH telecast. The country still remains under constant threat from cross border terrorism, hostile foreign intelligence agencies and there is a possibility to remotely control things so as to cause a chain reaction leading to undesignable activities against national interest.

50. The Committee notes that under the draft licence agreement which has been vetted by the Ministry of Home Affairs, it has been provided that the licensee is required to maintain recording of the programmes and advertisements for a period of 90 days so that it could be examined subsequently. The Committee observes that thus only after the happening of an incident or a telecast it would be possible to take any action against the licensee. It is also a matter of serious concern that the Ministry which would take necessary action against the licensee for violations of the licence agreement does not have a regular monitoring facility as such and has been maintaining an old facility for monitoring foreign broadcasting. The Committee does not share the optimism of Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Information and

Broadcasting that with the current monitoring mechanism they would be able to effectively monitor DTH telecast in the country. The Committee, therefore, urges the Ministry to modernise and update their monitoring mechanism commensurate with the technological sophistication of DTH.

51. The Committee notes that the Government is empowered under the Cable Television Networks Act to take prompt corrective measures in the interest of security, sovereignty and integrity of India, public order, decency, morality through designated District Magistrate/SDM/Commissioner of Police as the authorised officers for taking action against the erring cable operators. The Committee feels that the DTH telecast will be more powerful and sensitive compared to Cable TV and this may need stronger measures to be taken, but the Government instead of extending the areas of monitoring has restricted it only to the issue of security, morality and vertical monopoly. Therefore, the Government owes an explanation in this regard.

52. The Committee notes that while recommending DTH in the country, the Group of Ministers considered the benefits, which DTH could provide to the population all over the country. However, the Committee notes that DTH would remain beyond the reach of the common people on account of expensive subscription rates, which have been left to the market forces and to the whims of the service providers. The Committee feels that Art. 7.7 of the guidelines empowered the licensor to lay down guidelines/regulation in the interest of the consumer such as pricing of bouquet(s) or tier(s) of channels, etc. but the Government seems to have no materials to decide as there is no reliable estimate about the revenues and the cost involved to the DTH operator as well as the number of prospective subscribers. So the Government has completely left this service to the discretion of a service provider and market forces. The Committee observes that the private service provider being driven by profit motive only will not be under any obligation/compulsion to expand their infrastructure expeditiously to less profitable areas. They will operate in those areas only where they can maximise their profits. The Committee, therefore, feels DTH would be available only to niche segment of viewers having higher disposable

income and this segment as per the submission of the Ministry would constitute only one tenth of the cable TV subscribers. The Committee is of the view that the aim of any new media technology should be an egalitarian diffusion of information and entertainment. The Committee, therefore, calls upon the Government to ensure that the benefits of DTH telecast are available all over the country specially in rural and hilly areas and also that the service remains within the reach of the common man.

53. The Committee appreciates the efforts of Prasar Bharati in exploring the possibilities to employ Ku-band DTH technology to provide broadcasting in remote and hitherto uncovered areas. During a recent tour to the North-East, the Committee observed that the current means of broadcasting were neither providing quality reception nor were available in shadow areas. The Committee notes that as per Prasar Bharati's own estimate, an investment of Rs.700 crore was required to set up a viable DTH platform, therefore, the Committee feels that a provision of Rs.10 crore in the 10th Plan for carrying out experimental studies on DTH will be illusory. The Committee recommends that the Government should provide all out support to Prasar Bharati in its efforts to provide DTH Services in remote areas of the country.

New Delhi

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SOMNATH CHATTERJEE

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INFORMATION ECHNOLOGY*