

Minutes of the 11th Task Force meeting, on implementation of DAS, Held on 15th June 2012

11th meeting of the Task Force was held on 15th June, 2012. The meeting was chaired by the Secretary (I&B). List of participants is at Annexure. Following issues were discussed:

1) Secretary welcomed the Task Force Members for the meeting and asked the Joint Secretary to make a presentation on the current state of progress made in digitalization. JS (Broadcasting) in her presentation highlighted the following points:

i. **Timelines of various activities as discussed in the 10th Task Force meeting on 1st June 2012:** It was recapitulated that the following timelines were suggested by the Task Force members in the last meeting:

- a. Publication of RIOs and signing of Interconnection Agreements between MSOs & Broadcasters by 31st July, 2012, giving 60 days' time for negotiations and signing contracts. It also provides some lead time for certain delays in case the agreement fails and TRAI needs to intervene.
- b. 60 days' time required for signing of agreements between MSOs and Local Cable Operators. These agreements would thus be signed by 30th Sept 2012.
- c. Seeding of STBs: About 100 to 120 days' time for seeding of balance 70 lakh STBs after the interconnect agreements are signed between broadcasters & MSOs (31st July 2012). Thus, seeding of balance STBs would be completed by 30th Nov 2012.
- d. 15 days' time subsequently required for switchover from the present arrangement of digital plus analogue to only digital. So completion by 15th Dec 2012.

ii. **Meeting by Hon'ble MIB on 8th June 2012:** JS(B) mentioned that a format was circulated regarding various milestones to be achieved for implementation of DAS. All stakeholders were asked to submit the filled in form by 11.6.2012. The formats have now been collected from most stakeholders. Gist of the submissions made by various stakeholders was outlined as below:

- a. **Broadcasters:** Forms have been obtained from six broadcasters. Four of them have submitted that they would like DAS to be completed by 30.6.2012. Two broadcasters have said that the date could be 31st August 2012.
- b. **National Level MSOs:** **WWIL** has mentioned that complete switchover can be completed by 31.8.2012. **DEN** has mentioned that complete switchover can be completed by 15.9.2012. **Hathway** has mentioned that complete switchover in Delhi & Mumbai can be completed by 15.9.2012 and in Kolkata

- by 30th September 2012. **IMCL** has mentioned that complete switchover can be completed by 30.11.2012. **Digicable** has given 31st December, 2012 to complete the task.
- c. **Independent MSOs:** Out of six Independent MSOs, who attended the meeting, only three have submitted their feedback forms. All independent MSOs have unanimously suggested that the DAS could be completed by 31st December, 2012.
 - d. **Local Cable Operators:** Out of six LCOs, who attended the meeting, only one has submitted the feedback form. He has suggested that they would complete the digital switch over by 1st April, 2013.
 - e. **Consumer representative:** Consumer representative has offered no comments.
- iii. **Progress about seeding of Set Top Boxes (STBs) by National level MSOs.** She highlighted that total number of STBs required for digitalization in 4 Metros is approximately 1,23,16,500. However, against this requirement, up to 8th June 2012 only 30,79,247 STBs were seeded, leaving a balance of 92,37,253 STBs. She further highlighted that STBs seeded from 17th Mar to 13th April, 14th April to 11th May and from 12th May to 8th June were 193588, 288299 and 485815 respectively.
- iv. **Applications for MSOs:** Task Force was also apprised that out of 18 applications received from MSOs, letters of registration have already been issued to two; five cases are under approval; nine applicants have been asked to submit the affidavit and two applicants have been asked to submit the missing Form 2.
- 2) After the presentation, Secretary asked the Task Force Members to offer their views on the progress made on digitalization.
- i. It was highlighted by the MSO Alliance representative Shri Mansukhani that the RIOs by MSOs would be published by early next week. He said that discussions are on with the broadcasters for signing of interconnect agreements and these are likely to be signed before 31st July 2012. He added that a couple of court cases have been filed by MSOs and some clarifications are also required from TRAI with regard to Regulations but still some activities can be carried out concurrently to cut delay.
- On the query from the Secretary regarding the outcome of the discussions with the broadcasters, Shri Mansukhani mentioned that he would be able to give the update only in the next task force meeting.
- He mentioned that some of the STBs are being airlifted and some incentives are also being worked out for LCOs. He also mentioned that the supply of STBs from the Indian manufactures would start in 30 to 45 days.

- ii. The representative of the broadcasters, Sh Mohan, mentioned that the time schedule prepared in the last meeting can be slightly shortened as the seeding of STBs can be concurrently taken up with the signing of agreements. On the query from Additional Secretary, the representative of the MSOs Alliance informed that at present most of the STBs are being seeded directly by the MSOs. Seeding of STBs through LCOs would now pick up. On this issue, Secretary stressed that bare minimum time should be taken to complete an activity as it is a collective responsibility. Mr Mohan further added that the State Governments must provide the Right of Way to the cable operators as per the clause 4(B) of the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Amendment Act 2011.
- iii. Ms. Roop Sharma highlighted that agreements between MSOs and LCOs are yet to be signed, MSOs are either seeding the STBs directly or giving the STBs to only those LCOs who are aligned to them and each LCO is taking feed from 2 to 3 MSOs but now each MSO is asking for an advance of Rs 2 to 5 lakhs. It was further mentioned by her that LCOs who are having 300 to 500 connections are finding it difficult to pay. She pointed out that seeding of STBs is not taking place as consumer is not clear what to pay. Besides only 3 to 4 hours alone were available for seeding of STBs due to power cuts. She further highlighted that only vanilla type STBs were being provided. She also added that Right of Way is yet to be extended by the State Govt in number of areas.

Secretary while appreciating these concerns asked the broadcasters to take up these issues in their publicity campaigns. He directed that these issues may also be discussed in the sub group meeting.

- iv. Shri Hemant Upadhyay, representing consumers, stated that over 40 calls have been received in the last 3 to 4 days indicating that different rates for STBs are being charged from different consumers by LCOs.
- v. The representative of NBA mentioned that the seeding of STBs is the most critical activity at this stage and seeding of balance STBs would take about 3 months if the STBs are seeded at the rate of one lakh per day. For this purpose there must be a plan which should be monitored. It is to be ensured that the serious players are not disincentivised. He added that there is no clear communication to the consumers in spite of over Rs 300 crores spent on advertising. He suggested that a core group should be constituted to look at consumer awareness.

3) Secretary while concluding the meeting summarised that:

- i. It should be presumed that those who have not submitted the feedback in the format don't have anything to share.
- ii. MSOs and LCOs must ensure that the Grievance redressal Mechanism is in place and the quality standards are maintained.

- iii. A sub group to be headed by JS (B) may be constituted to evolve a synergised communication campaign to be launched for consumer awareness.
- iv. Ministry will, based on the latest inputs received from various stakeholders take a decision whether to extend the deadline for digitisation in four metros and if it is to be extended then for till what date.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

12th meeting of the Task Force would be held on **2nd July 2012 at 1530 hrs.**