

**Minutes of the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Task Force on Digital Addressable System in Cable Television Networks held on 16.07.2012**

The 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Task Force to assess the progress made by the industry towards digital switch-over of the cable television networks to the Digital Addressable System and to chalk out the measures for ensuring that the switch-over happens smoothly on the due date of 31.10.2012 in respect of four metro cities under the first phase, was held on 16.07.2012 under the Chairmanship of Additional Secretary, Ministry of I&B.

2. The list of the participants is attached.

3. Welcoming the members, the Chairman impressed upon the industry stakeholders the need to speed up the process of finalizing the interconnect agreement between the broadcasters and the MSOs on the one hand and the MSOs and LCOs on the other quickly, so that the picture as to the prices of channels and the monthly subscription becomes clear and the consumer is in a position to make an informed decision in the matter. He also emphasized that the pace of installation of Set Top Boxes has to be phased out in such a fashion that the complete installation is concluded by 30.09.2012 so that the last month is utilized for addressing any technical or teething troubles so that the stabilization of the system takes place by 31.10.2012.

4. Thereafter, JS(B) made a representation on the progress made so far in respect of installation of set up boxes. The main points of representation were as under:-

- i. The pace of weekly installation of STBs has waned considerably during the first week of July 2012 – from 1,38,919 in the week ending on 29.06.2012 to 66,942 in the week ending on 06.07.2012. This slackening does not inspire confidence.
- ii. The plan of installation of STBs has been received from all national level MSOs except Digicable. The details from independent MSOs are still awaited, in spite of the lapse of deadline. The defaulting independent MSOs have been issued Show Cause Notices.
- iii. The plan of installation of STBs, given by national level MSOs, reveal that pace of installation is very slow up to second week of August and suddenly picks up substantially during the last weeks. It was mentioned in the meeting that such phasing out of

installation of STBs, pinning on the massive installation during the last weeks is neither appropriate nor practicable. The phasing out should be evenly spread out so that there is no extra and impossible pressure during the last weeks. Therefore, MSOs have been advised to submit the revised CD plan.

iv. The Sub-Group on Public Awareness Campaign has been set up, which met on 12.07.2012 to consider formulation of an effective plan for public awareness. In the meanwhile, radio jingles are already on air on AIR and TV spots are also being prepared for airing on Doordarshan.

5. Thereafter, the discussions were held on the need for expediting the inter-connect agreements. AS mentioned that since there was a deadlock in setting the ball of negotiations rolling and neither of the industry stakeholders was taking initiative to go forward, the Ministry has asked MSOs and broadcasters to come together in a mode of open house session from 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2012 to 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2012 to conclude agreements by 20.07.2012. He emphasized that any delay in finalization of interconnect agreements will not be in the interest of implementation of DAS on scheduled date because the delay will make the package of monthly subscription uncertain and consumer would be in a dilemma, which would ultimately hamper their decision on timely seeding of STBs. He, therefore, urged the industry representatives to ensure that these agreements are finalized urgently.

6. The representative of DTH operator suggested that there should be a clause in the TRAI regulation that if the broadcasters and MSOs are not able to work out their agreement within the prescribed date, then a model interconnect agreement should automatically be applicable. He mentioned that this was the practice adopted at the time of implementation of CAS also. This point was supported by the representative of IBF also.

7. The representative of CEAMA stated that they are in a comfortable position to be able to supply STBs for which they have received orders and they would also be in a position to supply STBs for the requirement in respect of Phase-II.

8. The representative of MSO alliance stated that the national level MSOs would provide the requisite seeding data to the Ministry and would also re0-work out the seeding plan, as suggested by the Ministry, so that there is no back-loading during the last weeks.

9. The representative of COFI mentioned that there are certain areas which are not covered within the scope of digital feed and, therefore, appropriate action should be taken to ensure that entire geographical

expanse is covered by digital feed. She also mentioned that the Ministry may obtain the details and list of LCOs from each MSO so that the entire picture is with the Ministry.

10. It was mentioned by AS and JS that these two issues are being looked into and the digital mapping of areas have been sought from MSOs to avoid any area going uncovered by digital feed.

11. The representative of COFI also mentioned that in many of the STBs, there was a technical problem due to which the STBs get hung up and, as such, there was need to rectify the same within time. AS mentioned that it was exactly in order to address such issues that MOSs have been advised to complete the process of installation of STDs at least one month prior to 31.10.2012 so that such technical glitches could be addressed in time.

12. The representative of NBS mentioned that since TRAI regulation provides for availability of TV signals on a non-discriminatory basis, the issue of carriage free would also have to be considered between the broadcasters and MSOs on a uniform basis across a genre.

13. Thereafter, the meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

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