

DD Freedish to acquire ByDesign's CAS technology for MPEG4 expansion



NEW DELHI: Doordarshan's free-to-air (FTA) direct to home (DTH) service Freedish is planning to acquire Bangalore based ByDesign

India's conditional access system (CAS) so as to

increase its channel offerings to 112 from the current 64 by the end of March 2016.

In conversation with Indiantelevision.com, DD Director General C Lalrosanga said that the DTH player will switch over to MPEG 4 from the current MPEG 2 in two phases. “The first phase may begin by early next month,” he informed.

Late last year, the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY) approved a proposal by ByDesign India to develop an Indian conditional access system. ByDesign was to receive a support amount of Rs 19.79 crore from DeitY to develop the new system in association with Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC).

The ByDesign model is totally indigenous and built for DVB-C setup. This CAS solution will enable broadcasters to control access to their services by viewers, and thereby enabling them to extend their business models to subscription based schemes.

This will mean that the Freedish will become encrypted but will remain FTA. In addition to helping increase the number of channels on the platform, this will enable Freedish to gauge the exact number of households relying on Freedish as encrypted set top boxes (STBs) will only be available with authorised dealers.

Lalrosanga said that collection of rural data by the Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) India had shown that the claims made by Doordarshan about its reach were not erroneous. He said the BARC ratings had shown that both DD and Freedish had a tremendous reach in semi-urban and rural areas all over the country.

Lalrosanga went on to add that many homes were gradually switching over to Freedish as they could then get their entire entertainment for a one-time fee of purchasing a dish, which cost as low as Rs 700 to Rs 1200.

Prasar Bharati CEO Jawhar Sircar had said earlier this year that Freedish's aim was to reach 112 channels within a year or so.

At present, there is no vacant slot on Freedish since all channels that were on the platform and whose licences had expired have come back through the 24 e-auctions conducted over the past year.

Interestingly, the two new entrants on the platform – Aaj Tak and Big Magic – are pay channels, which are being run as FTA on Freedish. DD sources said that the reference interconnect agreement signed by these two channels no longer carries any non-discriminatory clause as it refers to Freedish.

Lalrosanga also added that DD was working towards bringing regional language films to the prime time slots over the weekend. Additionally, the pubcaster was actively thinking on the lines of a dedicated channel for children and young people.

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