



INDIANtelevision

# DD confident of achieving 112-channel target on FreeDish by March-end



NEW DELHI: Indian pubcaster Doordarshan is now confident that it will acquire the capacity of carrying 112 channels on its free-to-air (FTA) direct to home (DTH) service FreeDish by March-end.

DD director general C Lalrosanga told [Indiantelevision.com](http://Indiantelevision.com) that a meeting had been held recently by the engineering team in FreeDish and Doordarshan with experts from the Bangalore based ByDesign India.

DD is acquiring ByDesign's conditional access system (CAS) so as to increase its channel offerings from the current 64 by the end of March 2016.

The meeting was primarily aimed at assessing the requirement of CAS-enabled set top boxes (STBs) that will be needed to cover all regions of the country.

Lalrosanga said the DTH player will switch over to MPEG4 from the current MPEG2 in two phases.

“The first phase may begin this 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 STBs will only be available with authorised dealers.

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 costs as low as Rs 700 to Rs 1200.

Prasar Bharati CEO Jawhar Sircar had said early last 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, 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.