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Doordarshan In Wrong

An entirely unnecessary controversy has developed around the staging of one of the most prestigious international events that India has had the honour to host — the Reliance world cup of cricket. The Reliance cup organising committee and Doordarshan are on a collision course on the issue of sharing revenues from the live telecast of the matches. The organising committee has staked a claim for a nine per cent share on the "profit" of Rs 40 crores that Doordarshan is expected to make from advertisements. The mandarins of Mandi House have refused to concede this demand on the plea that it has never done this in the past. Somewhat ingeniously, they argue that talking about "profit" is off the mark since Doordarshan is not a commercial organisation; its revenues, they say, go into the consolidated fund of the government of India. This argument ignores the fact that Doordarshan will be earning the money only because of the Reliance cup, for the staging of which it can take no credit.

The director-general of Doordarshan, Mr Bhaskar Ghosh, has said that this is a policy issue which needs to be decided by higher authorities since Doordarshan is an "attached" office of the government of India. However, by raising this issue now and not earlier he is being a little too clever. The organising committee's letter asking for a share of the advertisement revenues was sent in early July. Thus Doordarshan has had enough time to work out a policy decision on it. If it has chosen not to, it can only mean that, as in the past, it had imagined that it could pressurise the organisers of the international event to refrain from pressing the point. This is not the first time that organisers of a sports meet and Doordarshan have clashed on the issue of payment. However, it is the first time that the standoff is between Doordarshan and a financially secure sports body. Cricket has become such a passion that the Reliance cup organising committee will face few hiccups in making up the Rs 3.6 crores it is demanding from Doordarshan. But then it will be the people who will pay for Doordarshan's lack of foresight.

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