

radio, not second channel, can help States

BY P. C. CHATTERJEE

3.10.84

The second channel of Calcutta Doodarshan Kendra is slated to go on the air in the near future.

and the Union Information and Broadcasting Minister, Mr. Ait-Partha, has rejected the West Bengal Chief Minister's request that the State Government be given control over it. This has once again brought to the fore the demand of non-Congress (I) governments that the Centre's monopoly over the telecasting media should not extend to the second channel too.

Some time back, the former West Bengal Finance Minister, Dr. Ashok Mitra, had made a bellicose statement that the State Government should go ahead with setting up its own TV station without waiting for anyone's approval, and then see if the Centre had the nerve to send armed police to take control of it.

One might have thought that the best economist, with much experience of Government both at the Centre and in the State, would not make such ill-informed statements. TV transmitters and equipment cannot be brought off the shelf nor can a TV centre be set up overnight in a clandestine manner. Fortunately, the West Bengal Gov-

ernment has been cautious and reasonable in what it has said on the subject.

At the Information Ministers Conference in July 1983, the West Bengal Information Minister said: "The two most important tools of opinion formation are AIR and Doodarshan. Both are controlled by the Central Government. The way these two media are being

used now leaves much to be desired. The allegation of their partial use cannot be dismissed lightly. We, in West Bengal, have felt on occasions that there was a serious misconception regarding the priorities of items in the *akhanda* news telecasts. There have been occasions when the State Government's news, including policy announcements by the Chief Minister, did not receive the attention due to them on issues where the Opposition standpoint got elaborate coverage. I request the Central Government to consider how these two media should be made to help

the State Governments in accordance with the hopes and aspirations of the people of the States, different linguistic groups, the socially backward and the poor". He was supported by the representative of Jammu and Kashmir. The context at that time was the attempt to arrive at a truly federal polity, and the West Bengal Government was merely arguing for a

second, and are prepared to pay the cost, should be provided a channel for educational purposes, especially in the rural areas. He pointed out that INSAT-1C, scheduled for launch early next year, will have two transponders and will provide four separate TV channels. These, he said, "can surely be made available initially to four States which are keen on operating separate channels".

The author is a former Director-General of All India Radio

more equitable adjustment between the Centre and the States in the use of the broadcasting media.

So far as control over the second TV channel is concerned, I am not aware of any detailed statement having been made by the West Bengal Government. So we have to fall back on what may be described as the "Hegde plan". The Karnataka Chief Minister, Mr. Raju, circulated a paper among M.P.s and others, which was subsequently published in Seminar in March 1983. In that paper he argued that State Governments, who so desire

rate channels.

This arrangement, according to him, in no way challenges the Constitution and its current interpretation. However, to bolster his argument, he contended that the present Central monopoly of broadcasting is against the spirit of a federal Union. He drew attention to Section 129 of the Government of India Act of 1953, according to which even the British Government conceded to the provinces and the Princely States the right to set up broadcasting stations.

Mr. Hegde also produced a note prepared by Dr. Palabhi Sharmayya, former president of the Congress and a member of the Constituent Assembly, advocating concurrent jurisdiction over broadcasting.

Mr. Hegde does not mention AIR in his paper. This is a serious omission, especially when he asserts that his intention is to carry education to the rural areas. Television sets are expensive and the Planning Commission, along with the Central and State Governments, has miserably failed to set aside funds for community viewing in the rural areas.

According to official estimates, the number of community viewing sets in the country does not exceed 10,000. So, who in the villages will view these educational programmes? It is no use arguing that State Governments have not given priority to community-viewing because they have no control over programming. Rural programmes, not only in radio but also on TV, are prepared in close consultation with the State's Agriculture and development departments. We have to remember our experience with radio in the fifties and

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resident, Vill. and P.O. S. Naburapur, 24-P. Dist. VIII and P.O. D. Mahurapur, 24-P. Dist. III. He is known to be known to the State Public Unit, Calcutta on 12-8-87. YRINDS & ELECTRO-NICS LTD. Place: B. Hunderford, Calcutta-700017. PUBLIC NOTICE: prospectus for the issue of 1,50,000 Equity Rs. 10 each for cash & authorized capital of Rs. 15,00,000. The prospectus should be read of Rs. 10,000 instead of Rs. 10,000. PN

By Rap

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second TV channel

(Continued from page 1 Col. 8)

sixties over community-listening. The States failed to come up with matching grants in a scheme jointly sponsored by them and the Centre. At present, transistor radios are cheap and widely distributed in the rural areas. If the State Governments are dissatisfied with what AIR is doing to publicise their development schemes and to muster mass support it would be worth their while to ask for radio channels and to set up local radio stations.

Local radio stations have figured on Five-Year Plans for over a decade now, but hardly any exist—and the centre has channels internationally allocated which are not being used. Studies have shown that TV can add little to the information on subjects which had already been dealt with by radio. Therefore, radio can do a great deal more than TV for the villagers and at one-tenth the cost.

Another curious fact is that Mr

Hegde should be making his request to use TV through satellite. It is a well-established fact that satellite transmission, with its centralized production procedures, is suited for linked programming to cover a wide area. It is not appropriate for rural education, which demands local production and participation.

One is left wondering what thinking, if any, has gone into the "Hegde plan". Regrettably, the glamour of TV has infected the leaders of Opposition parties as much as it has those of the Congress.

Indeed it is strange that Mr Hegde does not challenge the monopoly of the Centre over news and current affairs. The single most serious criticism of AIR and Door-darshan is of bias in these matters—yet he is content to let them pass.

However, even if we extend Mr Hegde's proposal to give the states control over at least one radio channel, in addition to TV, to present news and current affairs, it does not appear to be satisfactory. The suggestion may be attractive in so far as it would break the Centre's monopoly and would be welcomed by the non-Congress (I)-ruled States.

But in reality it would mean that the party in power would have a channel to publicise its point of view. It would not mean a more democratic use of the broadcasting media. If we go by recent experience, the non-Congress (I) Go-

Mid went into the chest of Kamaluddin.
lin. While Elias died on the spot,
has Kamaluddin died at the Tata Hos-
of pital, after giving a dying declara-
and tion to the police.

TI. Police said some of the docu-
men- sents recovered from the scooter
un- of Kamaluddin had information
showing alleged misdeeds of, the
42- college trust as also his strained
ned relations with it.

Four persons, all with criminal
ecol- background, have so far been ar-
ling rested on suspicion that they were
in hired for the job by interested per-
gar sons. The driver of one of the cars,
also with criminal background,
at was also traced and arrested later.
th The leader of the four is a notori-
re ous criminal involved in several
de murder cases, police said.

Police said Kamaluddin had in
his dying declaration at the hospi-
tal mentioned two names, one of
which is the son of the college
trustee. The trustee himself had
been convicted on a charge of at-
tempt to murder and sentenced for
11 years, but had come out of jail
after seven years. Many cases were
pending against him, police said.

Elias, who hailed from Panhesar
village in Nalanda district of
Bihar, was popular in the steel
elite for his investigative reporting.
He leaves behind a wife, three dau-
ghters and two sons.

Concern over attacks

PATNA, Oct. 2.—An emergen-
cy meeting of the Bihar Work-
ing Journalists' Union here yester-
day expressed concern over the co-
ntinued attacks on journalists, the
latest being the murder of M
Elias in Jamshedpur on Monday
reports PTI.

The meeting, presided over
by Mr B. N. Jha, resolved to send
a fact-finding team to Jamshedpur
to inquire into the incident.

