

Cable TV operators threaten to launch agitation



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Greater Guwahati Cable TV Operators Association (GGCTOA) has strongly protested against Zee Turner, the lone player of head-end in the sky (HITS) technology in Guwahati. Addressing the media persons, Rajesh Sarma and Md Iqbal Ahmed, the president and secretary, respectively of the organization, said that they would launch a democratic agitation from 25th March next against it..

They expressed deep concern about the recent development in the cable TV industry, which is posing serious threat to the livelihood of the operators. They said that they have been pioneer in distribution of satellite channels through analogue transmission system since a decade. They alleged that with rapid change in technology, new distribution platforms have emerged with introduction of direct to home platforms, IPTV etc, which work without cable. Recently the TV cable operators have also started digital transmission from the existing set-up.

Moreover, a new platform in the cable TV industry has emerged, whose control room operating outside Assam transmits the signals through AIR to the local cable operators. It is known as head-end in the sky (HITS). Local cable TV operators use the same technology for distribution to the household, but with digital transmission for which a Set-Top-Box (STB) is required at the subscriber-end. At present Zee Turner is the only player in the market offering the HITS technology through its company

WWIL.

The cable operators of Guwahati presently are taking the feed from Assam Cable Communication (ACC) having its control room at Guwahati serving the areas of Greater Guwahati from Narengi to Sonapur to Sualkuchi to Chhaygaon through analog mode. The ACC in collaboration with a local entrepreneur has also installed a digital control which shall be switched on within April next by using latest technology of scientific Atlanta, which is the third in India and first in the Northeast. This control room shall enable the viewers to enjoy contents and features that shall be prepared keeping in view the local requirements facilitating the viewers of Guwahati to enjoy international experience. It shall provide employment opportunities of the local youth and moreover operate with the objective of satisfying the local people with increasing number of local channels.

The WWIL- HITS due to various limitations have suffered in attracting the existing cable operators to their system and in Guwahati a new cable operator by the name and style of Nirman Associates is already in dispute over having links with cable operators being disconnected by ACC due to non-payment of dues, has installed the WWIL- HITS. It is providing service to default operators which is illegal as accepted by TRAI. The new operator has started encroaching areas of existing operators of the city.

The members of GGCTOA have been paying taxes to the government in the form of license fees, service tax, amusement tax and charges of the pay channels for the areas served for last fifteen years. The new operators with both digital and analogue signals are posing serious threat to the existing cable operators as it is creating new operators in those areas where members of GGCTOA are already operating. Disputes in the form of armed conflict have also taken place in certain areas.

Many FIRs have been lodged in various police stations till now. The organization has condemned the activities of Zee Turner, which has created this situation by appointing dummy operators and threatening the livelihood of cable TV operators. The Zee Turner has provided digital signals and also packages of Zee in the analogue for which they are charging from members of GGCTOA also. They have an agreement with ACC according to which they are charging for entire Guwahati, but still they have provided signals to a new operator which is in violation of the agreement.

The organization also approached the MSO Association of North East (MANE) which has resolved to block the monthly subscription amount for the Zee packages and in the regular correspondence with the authorities of Zee Turner but nothing fruitful has come out except the false commitments. Therefore, the organization has been compelled to begin agitation through various democratic methods. The cable operators will switch off ZeeTurner packages for three hours in the morning and three hours in the evening on 25 March and if no solution is arrived within 24 hours it would go for total black out of the cable network from 8 am to 8 pm and a fresh memorandum would be submitted to Zee Turner to withdraw the analogue signals from this new operator, Sarma said.

Daya Nath Singh

Journalist; Guwahati Press Club office Secretary

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