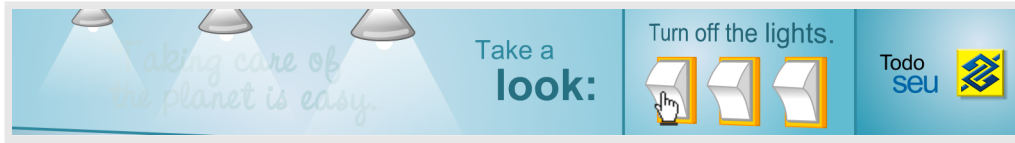


ADVERTISEMENT



IPS Direct to Your Inbox!

your email

- Global Affairs

- Africa

- Asia-Pacific

Afghanistan

Iran

- Caribbean

Haiti

- Europe

Union in Diversity

- Latin America

- Mideast & Mediterranean

Iraq

Israel/Palestine

- North America

Neo-Cons

Bush at War

ADVERTISEMENT



- Development

MDGs

City Voices

Corruption

- Civil Society

- Globalisation

- Environment

Energy Crunch

Climate Change

Tierramérica

- Human Rights

- Health

HIV/AIDS

- Indigenous Peoples

- Economy & Trade

- Labour

- Population

Reproductive

Rights

Migration&Refugees

- Arts & Entertainment

- Education

- ExPress Freedom

- Columns

- In Focus

- Readers' Opinions

- Email News

What is RSS?

Subscribe

LANGUAGES

MEDIA-INDIA: Community Radio Stifled With Red Tape

By Keya Acharya

BANGALORE, Feb 13 (IPS) - Aspiring community radio operators from various parts of the country are complaining of long delays, frustration and bureaucratic red tape in obtaining licenses to run radio stations.

Following a landmark Supreme Court judgment in 1995 that declared airwaves to be public property for public good, members of civil society organisations as well as United Nations agencies such as UNESCO and UNDP held several consultative meetings to expand the eligibility criteria for community radio.

In 2006, the Indian government amended its broadcasting rules to allow independent radio operators set up non-commercial, community-based stations in rural and urban areas.

But the new rules do not allow community radio stations to network with one another and limited broadcast range; no news content is allowed and only five minutes per hour is allowed for advertisements.

"The low 100-watts capacity is fit only for a 10-km distance while urban community radio does not come about because of a lack of frequency," says Stalin K, founder-member of a networking organisation called Community Radio Forum and of the Drishti Media Collective in Gujarat.

The radio frequency allowed by the government in urban areas has to be shared with commercial FM radio, wireless and cell phone operators, leaving community radio with very little frequency bandwidth to operate.

"It is clearly better to have specific frequencies to be allocated for community radio, like other countries such as Thailand or the United States," says Stalin.

Steve Buckley, Asia-Pacific president of the World Association of Community Radio, (AMACR) says Australia has an active and lively tradition of community-based radio, while Indonesia follows as actively despite political upheavals.

The Philippines too has active community-radio, but with legal constraints, says Buckley.

In India, the Community Radio Forum, a network of NGOs in community radio had been advocating for some years for the Indian government to free the airwaves, still under State control, in spite of the Prasar Bharati Act 1990 which set up an ostensibly independent broadcasting corporation in India.

Though the government had intentions of allowing 4,000 community radio stations by 2008, no operators have yet been given licenses to broadcast. Seven community radio stations have been given a 'letter of intent' by the government to operate, pending final approval.

"The government is also a 'first-timer' in community radio, just as you are," explained Sajan Venniyoor, a broadcast consultant to the government, at the annual conference of the Community Radio Forum, held in Bangalore this year.

"With four ministries involved in the procedure, the mechanisms for permits have still not evolved," says Venniyoor.

UNESCO's Asia Adviser for Communication and Information based in New Delhi, Jocelyn Josiah, says she understands the government's caution in issuing operating licenses. "In a country as big as this, with its many languages and ethnic considerations, it is understandable that the government would have security concerns", she told IPS.

UNESCO actively promotes community-based radio as a means of cultural interaction and media development. The organisation published, in 2008, a technical manual authored by N. Ramakrishnan, on how to set up community radio, 'keeping in mind the government of India's intention to establish 4,000 community radio stations by 2008', according to the UNESCO-New Delhi website.

One of the country's first ventures in community radio was a UNESCO-sponsored cabled system called Namma Dhvani (our voices), set up in 2000 by a media NGO, Voices in collaboration with Myrada, a respected rural-development NGO. The station is now being run independently by the community at Budikote in Kolar district, 50 km outside Bangalore. Namma Dhvani uses television cables, with tape recorded programmes being aired either through loudspeakers, television sets or computers, depending on the location.

The station generates its operating expenses through charging fees for training services and programmes related to the community's needs, from airing the local administrative election details to legal advice and banking training.

"We are waiting for the government to give us permission to go on air through radio," says Ashish Sen,



China a Growing Presence in Africa

► **China Outdoes Europeans in Congo**
Analysis by John Vandaele*

► **CHINA: Sudan - Showcase for New Assertiveness**

By Antoaneta Bezlova

► **Darfur Groups Ask U.S. Funds to Drop Chinese Oil Majors**

By Abid Aslam

► **Hope, Concern Greet China's Growing Prominence in Africa**

By Michael Deibert

► **China - New Promoter of Mega Dams**

By Antoaneta Bezlova



► **POLITICS-US: Election Outcome May Hinge on Youth Vote**

► **POLITICS-US: Obama Surpasses Clinton as Democratic Front-Runner**

► **POLITICS-US: The King Is Dead. Long Live McCain?**

► **POLITICS-US: Iranian-Americans Seek Least-Hawkish Candidate**

► **POLITICS-US: Super Tuesday Leaves Bruising Battles Ahead**

[More >>](#)



► **Q&A: "Vitamin A and Zinc Should Be an Essential Part of Malaria Control Strategies"**

► **ARGENTINA: Boost for Coal Mine Revives Stagnant Town**

► **CLIMATE CHANGE: Security Council Urged to Punish CO2 Offenders**

► **CANADA: High Housing Prices Swell Ranks of Homeless**

► **RIGHTS: Widows Face a Life of Quiet Destitution**

- [ENGLISH](#)
- [ESPAÑOL](#)
- [FRANÇAIS](#)
- [ARABIC](#)
- [DEUTSCH](#)
- [ITALIANO](#)
- [JAPANESE](#)
- [NEDERLANDS](#)
- [PORTUGUÊS](#)
- [SUOMI](#)
- [SVENSKA](#)
- [SWAHILI](#)
- [TÜRKÇE](#)

director of Voices, "and gearing up our technology for that."
(END/2008)

[Send your comments to the editor](#)

RELATED IPS ARTICLES

- ▶ [MEDIA-SRI LANKA: Building Ethnic Harmony With Community Radio](#)
- ▶ [MEDIA-THAILAND: Community Radio Refuses to Go Silent](#)
- ▶ [MEDIA-THAILAND: Interference Mars Community Radio](#)

- ▶ [RIGHTS: U.N. Sees Progress in Ending Female Genital Mutilation](#)
- ▶ [RIGHTS: Hiroshima Forum to Focus on Children Under Siege](#)
- ▶ [DEVELOPMENT: China Outdoes Europeans in Congo](#)
- ▶ [RIGHTS-AFRICA: No Sex, Please - You're HIV-Positive](#)
- ▶ [DEVELOPMENT-NICARAGUA: Despite Efforts, MDGs Still Distant Goals](#)

[More >>](#)

RELATED WEB SITES

- ▶ [Asia Media Forum](#)

-  [News Feeds RSS/XML](#)
-  [Make IPS News your homepage!](#)
-  [Free Email Newsletters](#)
-  [IPS Mobile](#)
-  [Text Only](#)



Share this story

-  [del.icio.us](#)
-  [newsvine](#)
-  [reddit](#)
-  [StumbleUpon](#)
-  [YAHOO! My Web](#)



READ IN IPSNEWS.NET >>

IRAQ: BEYOND THE GREEN ZONE



▶ [IRAQ: A New Force Called Sahwa Shows Its Muscle](#)

[More >>](#)

CONFRONTING CLIMATE CHANGE



▶ [DEVELOPMENT: 'Food Miles' Hard to Digest](#)

[More >>](#)

ECONOMY, TRADE & FINANCE



▶ [ECONOMY-ANGOLA: \(Responsible\) Foreign Investment Welcome](#)

[More >>](#)

[Contact Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [Subscription](#) | [News in RSS](#) | [Email News](#) | [Mobile](#) | [Text Only](#)
Copyright © 2008 IPS-Inter Press Service. All rights reserved.