

Doordarshan to strengthen DTH platform

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National broadcaster Doordarshan is seeking to strengthen its direct-to-home (DTH) platform - DD Direct Plus - and expects to have some 200 channels on its platform by end of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan or 2012.

At present, DD Direct Plus has a bouquet of 57 Free-to-Air (FTA) channels.

In the first phase by the end of 2010, DD Direct Plus aims to have about 100 FTA channels. In second phase, it is targeting 200 channels of which many will be FTA channels.

Currently, 31 of the 57 channels are from the DD stable.

STRONG RESPONSE

"We have an overwhelming response from private channels to get on to the DD Direct Plus platform. Even some of the pay channels are willing to go free," said Ms Aruna Sharma, Director-General, Doordarshan.

"There's a waitlist of 74 private channels seeking an entry to the DD Direct platform," Ms Sharma said without disclosing their names. Some of the private channels such as Zee Smile, B4U Music and 9X are already on the DD Direct platform.

SUBSCRIPTION CHARGE

Hinting at the possibility of DD Direct Plus starting to



Ms Aruna Sharma

charge subscribers once it has over 100 channels, Ms Sharma said "pricing will depend on the policy at that point of time." In the Fifth Plan, DD is investing about Rs 85 crore in strengthening the DD Direct platform.

THE REACH

Currently, DD Direct Plus reaches over six million homes, while the total subscriber base of private-sector players is expected to be around 18 million. An estimated two million DTH households were added in the October-December quarter.

DTH subscribers constitute a small portion of the overall television viewers in the country at present.

Analysts expect the DTH industry to grow at a compounded annual rate of 30 per cent by 2012. The overall television viewership in India is expected to grow to 132 million by 2012, up from 115 million.