

Digital makeover for DD, AIR soon

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NEW DELHI: In three years from now, when the spectrum wars hot up, and television and radio channels will be fighting left, right, and centre for space, our own home-brewed Doordarshan and All India Radio will be sailing through with twice their present capacity.

A proposal to upgrade Doordarshan and All India Radio to digital mode through a complete "switchover from analog to digital" is likely to come up before the cabinet on Thursday.

Highly placed government sources told *Hindustan Times*,

A PROPOSAL TO UPGRADE DD AND AIR TO DIGITAL MODE IS LIKELY TO COME UP BEFORE THE CABINET ON THURSDAY

the proposed switch, which is expected to cost Rs 1463.5 crore, would be carried out over the next three years.

The primary benefits from digitalisation, would be the manner in which available, spectrum — already a scarce resource — would be optimised.

A digital terrestrial trans-

mitter can telecast six or even eight television channels compared to the single channel that an existing analogue terrestrial transmitter in a given channel bandwidth can.

In the case of Radio, a digital transmitter in Medium Wave mode can broadcast two FM quality channels and four Compact Disc quality channels in FM mode as opposed to the existing single channel capacity of the analogue MW/FM transmitter.

In the case of radio, switching to digital has become a necessity because broadcast equipment manufacturers across the world have switched

to digital sets.

All India Radio officials admit — albeit off the record — that eventually spare parts for analogue equipment will not be available.

In the case of Doordarshan, the switch will facilitate the extremely important digital archiving facilities that are currently absent.

In both cases there will be considerable saving of power and spectrum.

A senior official pointed out that both DD and AIR have had problems finding, hiring, or retaining, qualified technical staff. Digitalisation will also minimise the need for technical staff.