UNIT 8 : TELEVISION BROADCASTING IN NORTH EAST INDIA

UNIT STRUCTURE

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8.1LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to :

- explain the role of public service broadcasting in India with reference to Doordarshan,
- give an overview of the growth of private TV channels in north east India.

8.2 INTRODUCTION

Television first came to India on Sept 15, 1959. The primary purpose of introducing television in India was development through education, and information and to improve the quality of life of the larger masses, to bring communities and societies, regions and states together as one nation. Today, Doordarshan, the national television network of India, is one of the largest broadcasting organisations in the world.

Since 1991, with the coming of private satellite channels, television

brought a revolutionary change in the way people receive information and understand the world. At present there are more than 50 foreign satellite channels beaming programmes to India, the major players being STAR TV (Satellite Television Asia Network), CNN, Sony Television, ATN (Asia Television Network), BBC World, Discovery Channel, TNT, MTV, Cartoon Network and others.

In the last unit we have discussed about the organisational structure of Doordarshan as well as the growth of cable and satellite channels in India. In this unit you will learn about the role played by Doordarshan which is India's public broadcaster and the growth of private television channels in our country.

8.3 DOORDARSHAN WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO DDK GUWAHATI & PPC-NE

Doordarshan which literally means 'Television', is the public television broadcaster of India under the Prasar Bharati, a public service broadcaster nominated by the Government of India. Doordarshan is one of the largest broadcasting organizations in the world in terms of the infrastructure of studios and transmitters.

Doordarshan had a modest beginning with a small transmitter and a makeshift studio in September in the year 1959 when it was started for an experimental telecast. The regular daily transmission of Doordarshan started in 1965 as a part of All India Radio. The television service was extended to Mumbai (then Bombay) and Amritsar in 1972. Till 1975, Doordarshan remained the only television channel in India providing television service to its seven cities. Television services were separated from radio in 1976. The offices of All India Radio and Doordarshan were placed under the management of two separate Director Generals in New Delhi with Doordarshan finally emerging as a National Broadcaster.

The year 1982 was marked by two major events, the introduction of national programme and colour TV in the Indian market. Further, Indians also witnessed the live telecast of the Independence Day speech by then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on 15th August 1982 which was followed by

the coverage of the 1982 Asian Games being held in Delhi. 1980s were remarked as an era of soaps in Doordarshan. Soaps like *Hum Log* (1984), *Buniyaad* (1986-87), comedy shows like *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi* (1984) and mythological dramas like *Ramayan* (1987-88) and *Mahabharata* (1988-89) glued millions to Doordarshan. Other popular programs included Hindi film songs based programs like *Chitrahaar* and *Rangoli* and crime thrillers like *Karamchand* (starring Pankaj Kapoor), *Byomkesh Bakshi* (starring Rajit Kapur) and *Janki Jasoos*.

At present more than 90 percent of the Indian population can receive Doordarshan (DD National) programmes through a network of nearly 1400 terrestrial transmitters with about 46 Doordarshan studios producing TV programs every day.

Doordarshan operates 19 channels among which two are All India channels, 11 Regional languages Satellite Channels (RLSC), four State Networks (SN), an International channel, a Sports Channel and two channels (DD-RS & DD-LS) for live broadcast of parliamentary proceedings.

On Doordarshan's National channel, Regional programmes and Local Programmes are carried on time-sharing basis. To meet the demand of a 24 hour news channel Doordarshan launched its DD-News channel on 3rd November 2003 replacing its DD-Metro Entertainment channel. The Regional Languages Satellite channels have two components– the Regional service for the particular state relayed by all terrestrial transmitters in the state and additional programmes in the Regional Language in prime time and non-prime time available only through cable operators. Sports Channel is exclusively devoted to the broadcasting of sporting events of national and international importance. Doordarshan's DD Sports is the only sports channel which telecasts rural sports like Kho-Kho, Kabbadi etc., something which private broadcasters avoid telecasting as it does not attract any revenues.

DD-India is being broadcast internationally through Satellite. It is available in 146 countries worldwide; however, the information on picking up this channel in other countries is not easily available. In the UK for instance, DD-India is available through the Eurobird Satellite on the Sky

system on Channel 833 (the logo is shown as Rayat TV). The timing and programming of DD-India international is different from that of India.

All the regional Doordarshan Kendras generate programmes in their respective regional languages to cater to its regional audience. Both the Regional Language Satellite Services and the Regional State Networks broadcast a wide spectrum of programmes covering developmental news, serials, documentaries, news and current affairs programmes to communicate with the people in their own language. The respective states receive their own vernacular programmes in two ways. The programmes are telecast through terrestrial transmission during the regional window of DD National and round the clock on the Regional Language Satellite Channels across the country.

The development of TV services in the North East is being given priority by Doordarshan. The hilly terrain in this part of the country makes it necessary to have a very large number of transmitters. At present there are 12 programme production Centres with 132 transmitters of Doordarshan in the North-East.

Doordarshan has taken adequate steps to focus on the accurate presentation of the diverse culture of North Eastern states. DD North East Channel is a composite satellite television service for the North Eastern states broadcasting programmes in Assamese, English and other languages and dialects of the North East. The programme mix includes entertainment serials, informative programmes, social programmes, news and current affairs, art and culture.

Doordarshan has tried to set up television studios in the capital cities of all the North Eastern states. There are studios in the capital cities of all the eight states of Meghalaya, Manipur, Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. Additional TV centres are also set up to meet the need of coverage at Tura in the Garo Hills of Meghalaya and also at Dibrugarh & Silchar in Assam.

With the exception to DDK Guwahati, all these TV centres originate programmes in the various dialects for a duration of 120 minutes on week days. In addition, all the transmitters in the North East relay a composite

programme originating from Guwahati which includes a news bulletin in English and a composite programme of interest to the people of all the North Eastern states. Satellite up-linking facilities have also been provided in all the capital stations of the North East. These facilities help feeding of news and other topical programmes to Guwahati and Delhi.

List of DDKs in Northeast India

Kendra	Inauguration	Language	Duration of Telecast
Itanagar	5/2/1996	Hindi	6 pm – 8 pm
Guwahati	24/3/1985	Assamese	3 pm -8 pm
Dibrugarh	31/5/1993	Assamese	6 pm – 8 pm
Silchar	30/4/1993	Assamese and Bengali	6 pm – 8 pm
Imphal	30/4/1993	Manipur	6 pm - 8 pm
Shillong	30/41993	Khasi and Jantia	6 pm - 8 pm
Tura	31/5/1993	Garo	6 pm - 8 pm
Aizawl	12/6/1995	Mizo	6 pm - 8 pm
Kohima	30/3/1993	English	6 pm - 8 pm
Gangtok	1/11/2004		
Agartala	20/11/1992	Bengali and Kokbork	6 pm - 8 pm

Source: www.ddindia.gov.in

The government's monopoly over television over the years has resulted in Doordarshan being tightly controlled by successive governments. In principle, Doordarshan is answerable only to the Parliament. The Parliament lays down the guidelines that Doordarshan is expected to adhere to in its programming and Doordarshan's budget is debated and approved by Parliament. But the guidelines established by the Parliament to ensure Doordarshan's political neutrality are largely ignored in the face of the majority that ruling parties have held in Parliament. Doordarshan has been subjected more to the will of the government than the oversight of Parliament. Successive governments and ruling political parties have used

Doordarshan to further their political agendas, weakening its credibility as a neutral participant in the political process. There have been periodic attempts to reconstitute Doordarshan into a BBC-like public corporation, but governments have been reluctant to relinquish their hold on such a powerful medium.

The government drew its right to operate the country's broadcasting services as a monopoly from the Indian Telegraph Act of 1885 which empowers the government with the exclusive right to "establish, maintain and work" wireless services. In addition, the Constitution lists broadcasting as the sole domain of the Parliament, effectively shutting out the states from making any laws with regard to television. Within the ambit of these provisions, it was assumed that media autonomy or liberalization in any form was the prerogative of the government to grant. But the government's monopoly was challenged in the Indian Supreme Court in 1995. The Court held that the government monopoly over broadcasting was unconstitutional and while the government has the right to regulate broadcasting in the public interest, the Constitution forbids monopoly control over any medium by either individuals or the government. The Court directed the government to establish an independent public authority for "controlling and regulating" the use of airwaves. The Court's decision holds out the promise of significant structural changes in Indian broadcasting and the possibility that terrestrial television may finally free itself from governmental control.

It is evident that over the time the State's control over television will continue to diminish. As its revenue structure begins to change and Doordarshan begins to respond to increasing commercial pressures, the character of its programming will begin to reflect increasingly the demands and pressures of the market place. In the meantime, caught between the government and the market, Doordarshan continues to struggle to maintain its mandate of public service programming. But the Supreme Court's recent decision ordering the government to establish an independent broadcasting authority to regulate television in the public interest holds the promise of allowing Indian television to escape both the stifling political control of the state and the commercial pressures of the market. There are a number of other constituencies like state governments, educational institutions, non-

governmental organizations and social service agencies who can participate in a liberalized broadcast system. The Supreme Court has provided an opportunity to develop a broad based television system. How the country responds to this opportunity in the next few years will determine the future of broadcasting in India in the next century.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1 : What is the literal meaning of Doordarshan?

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Q.2 : When was DD News Channel launched?

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Q.3 : Which is the only sports channel to telecast rural sports like Kabaddi and Kho-Kho?

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Q.4 : In the UK, DD-India is available through the ..... Satellite on the Sky system on Channel 833.

Q.5 : Briefly describe the development of TV scenario in North East India.

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Q.6 : When was television separated from radio?

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Q.7 : When did India's first colour TV broadcast take place?

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8.4 GROWTH OF PRIVATE TV CHANNELS IN NORTH EAST INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ASSAM

The Gulf war of 1991 was a major landmark influencing the television scene in the country. The American news channel CNN was the first to beam transnational signals on the war to India. These transmissions by CNN clearly opened up enormous possibilities. A large number of small enterprising youngsters saw the enormous potentiality of this as a viable business activity. They initiated the present mode of distributing satellite signals through a cable network to individual households. Reception of the satellite channels in India takes place in a unique manner. The cable operator receives the satellite channels and he distributes them through a cable network to the household subscribers for a small fee. Along with CNN many other foreign private satellite channels saw the huge market that was India. Amongst the earliest initiatives came from Rupert Murdoch's Star TV. 1992 was the beginning of Star TV network through the **AsiaSat-1**. They offered a bouquet of free-to-air channels consisting of soap operas, movies, music, sports, news and so on. Initially all these channels were English language channels. For the first time this gave the Indian audiences - used to the monopoly of Doordarshan –a look at the variety that the television was capable of offering.



AsiaSat : **Asia Satellite Telecommunications Co. Ltd.** It is a commercial operator of communication spacecraft. AsiaSat is based in Hong Kong with two major shareholders, CITIC and General Electric.

But as things were to prove later, expansion through totally English language-based channels was not a feasible proposition to sustain in a country like India with its rich diversity, linguistically, socially and racially, and with a unique cultural ethos. Moreover, a multi cultural society will not be satisfied only on foreign-sourced programmes. Many enterprising Indians saw and seized this opportunity; the earliest being Zee TV network which started a Hindi language channel. It offered programmes produced in India for Indian audiences and transmitted through a foreign satellite. They soon expanded to a bouquet of channels. Indian made soap operas, music; feature film based channels became favourites amongst the large number of middle-class homes in the country. Today, out of 70 million TV households

of the country, about 37 million receive satellite channels. The growth in the number of channels has been exponential especially in the Indian regional languages. Southern states of India took a major initiative in this regard. The major initiative came from Sun TV which started a Tamil language channel and soon the channels in other languages like Kannada, Malayalam and Telugu were initiated by many. Today there are well over 90 channels which an Indian consumer can get in English language as well as in Hindi and other regional languages.

The growth and development of electronic media in the North Eastern states has been slow as compared to many other states of the country. For a long time, All India Radio and Doordarshan were the sole operators in the field of electronic media allowing state-run media to monopolise the whole affairs of the medium. It is only in the recent past that the trend of private radio stations and private television stations has been set forth. However, Doordarshan has competitions from the growing number of satellite channels and their gradual popularity in the region. In Nagaland, the private television industry is yet to see the light of the day as there are not too many television channels to cater to the needs of people of Nagaland. FETV or Far East TV is the only saviour which operates from the state and which beams its signals to almost 125 countries across Asia, Europe, Australia, Middle East and South Africa.

The electronic media scenario in Meghalaya is not much developed as compared to the other north eastern states. Apart from state-run AIR and DD, there are not too many television channels for the people of Meghalaya. State-owned Doordarshan transmits terrestrial television channels. There are a few weekly channels like PCN, Ri Khasi Channel, Batesi that are broadcast weekly on the cable networks. The only news broadcaster in English is Media Plus.

In Mizoram, apart from Doordarshan there are private channels. These local channels have proved very useful and effective for publicity and educational purposes. The DD Mizoram is a State owned TV channel which is telecast from Doordarshan Kendra Mizoram. Prasar Bharati will soon launch a television channel known as 'Prabha' for Arunachal Pradesh

and Sikkim to help promote the rich art and culture of these two north-eastern states. North East Live is the news channel of Arunachal Pradesh. It is the sister channel of Guwahati based Pride East Entertainment Private Limited.

In Manipur, Information Service Television Network broadcasts news in English and Assamese. The advent of satellite and cable television, together with the introduction of more sophisticated printing technology and computers have, in a way transformed Media in Mizoram. Doordarshan Kendra, Imphal in general telecast programmes in Manipuri, the official language and lingua-franca of the state. DDK, Imphal tries to cater to the infotainment requirement of the people in the state. Besides Doordarshan's local programmes, people turn to Cable TV for entertainment and news. About 29 Cable Operators are doing business in the urban and semi-urban areas.

DD Tripura is a state owned TV channel which is telecast from Doordarshan Kendra, Agartala. Apart from Doordarshan, the state of Tripura has a vibrant electronic media specially in the case of television. Aakash Tripura is a very popular television channel. Khabar 365, NE Bangla and Voice 24 Tripura are some of the other popular satellite channels of the state. Khobor 365 Din is a Satellite Free to Air TV channel which is specially beamed for the people of Tripura in Bengali / Assamese language. This channel was launched by Brand Value Communications and is available on Videocon D2H DTH.

Doordarshan has wide reach and access in Sikkim. Focus NE (formerly NE TV) of Guwahati has also launched its operations in the state of Sikkim.

Growth of Private Satellite Channels in Assam : In comparison to pan Indian television scenario, Assam was also not an exception to the monopoly rule of Doordarshan till 2004. It was only in 2004 when Assam in particular and North East India in general got the first private satellite channel of North Eastern India known as North East Television (NE TV) which is now known as Focus NE. For the next four years, Focus NE was the lone private player in Assam. It was post 2008, when Assam witnessed an

unparallel growth of television channels one after another either owned directly or indirectly by political and business groups. It will be pertinent to mention here that as per the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting estimates ending July 2014, India has 798 permitted private satellite television channels. The main news channels in Assam are -

- DY 365
- Focus NE
- News Live
- News Network
- News Time Assam
- Prag News
- Frontier TV

Apart from the news channels there are also entertainment based channels in Assam as given below-

- DD North-East
- Rang
- Rengoni
- Focus HiFi
- Jonakk
- Prag Channel
- Ramdhenu

Prag is the oldest local News Channel of the North East region, launched in 2000 and operating out of Guwahati. Prag is distributed across India through Citi Cable, parts of Bihar (Darsh Network), Jammu & Kashmir (7 Sea), Fast Way (Punjab) & West Bengal (CTVN). It is available across Assam and entire North-East Regions and enjoys a viewership of over 10 millions.

Focus NE (formerly called NE TV) is the first 24 hour private satellite channel of North-East India, which covers the eight states of the region. Launched in 2003, it is also the first earth station and teleport of the northeast which is owned by Positive Television Pvt. Ltd. Equipped with three state-of-the-art studios with uplink facility from Guwahati, it is basically a 24-hour news-

based channel airing news bulletins and current affairs programmes in different languages of Assam and other north-eastern languages. It broadcasts news in Assamese, English, Hindi, Bengali, Manipuri, Nagamese, Bodo, Mizo, Garo, Nepali language etc. Apart from news it also telecasts many infotainment programmes. It also has two subsidiary channels- Focus Hi-Fi and Focus Bangla which are entertainment-based channels that tries to depict the rich cultural heritage of the eight states of the North East.

News Live channel, owned by Pride East Entertainment Pvt. Ltd was launched on 21st January, 2008. It is a 24-hour bi-lingual news channel covering events from across the world, with emphasis on Assam and the North East.News Live is the country's first automated satellite news channel with six online bureaus from across Assam and New Delhi. News Live has several Bureaus across India.

DY365 is a 24-hour satellite channel of Assam. DY365 broadcasts news in Assamese, Hindi, Bengali and English language. It was launched on October 30, 2008. DY365 is a unit of Brahmaputra Tele Productions Pvt. Ltd. The channel has several Bureaus across India.

News Time Assam is another news channel of Assam which was launched on 25th December, 2010. This channel believes in reaching out to the people with news and programming that reflects the burning issues of the masses.

Another satellite channel which has been able to make a mark in the field of electronic news broadcasting is the **Frontier TV.** This unique Northeast-centric channel headquartered in Guwahati has emerged to be one of the leading innovative and interactive TV channels from Northeast. The Channel airs bulletins and programming in four major languages of the region - Assamese, Bengali, Hindi and English.

DD North-East is a state owned TV channel which is being telecast from Doordarshan Kendra in Guwahati, Agartala, Kohima, Imphal, Silchar,

Dibrugarh, Tura, Aizawl, Itanagar and Shillong. DD North East Channel is a composite satellite television service for the North Eastern states of India broadcasting programmes in Assamese, Bengali, English and other languages and dialects of the North East region.

News Network is another private television channel of Assam that was launched in August 2011.

Prime News TV Channel is a newly launched Assamese news channel. This news channel telecasts variety of entertainment as well as infotainment programs and shows on a daily basis. It shows the cultural colours of Assam and promotes the cultural heritage of the whole area along with the rest of the country.

Rengoni, a premium general entertainment channel of North East India, features a mixture of fiction and non-fiction with a new look and feel.

Rang is an Assamese language general entertainment television channel owned by Pride East Entertainments Pvt. Ltd. of Guwahati, Assam and launched on 1st October, 2009. It is a sister channel of popular Assamese news channel News Live.

Ramdhenu is a TV channel specializing in music of northeast India. It was launched in October 1, 2011 and is a part of the Pride East Entertainments Pvt. Ltd. based in Guwahati, Assam. It is the first ever satellite music TV channel of the northeast India. The channel broadcast music videos in Assamese and other northeastern languages.

The popular satellite channel from Assam, DY365 launched its entertainment based channel '**Jonakk'** on 3rd July, 2010.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.8 : Which was the first foreign satellite channel to beam its signal into India?

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Q.9 : Name the first Indian satellite channel.

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Q.10 : Which is the first private satellite channel to be launched in the North East.

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Q.11 : When was News Live channel launched?

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8.5 LET US SUM UP

- Television first came to India on Sept 15, 1959.
- Television services were separated from radio in 1976.
- The year 1982 was marked by two major events, the introduction of national programme and colour TV in the Indian market.
- Doordarshan launched its DD-News channel on 3rd November 2003 replacing its DD-Metro Entertainment channel.
- The American news channel CNN was the first to beam transnational signals on the Gulf War to India.
- Focus NE (formerly called NE TV) is the first 24 hour private satellite channel of North-East India.
- News Live channel, owned by Pride East Entertainment Pvt. Ltd was launched on 21st January, 2008.
- The popular satellite channel from Assam DY365 launched its entertainment based channel 'Jonakk' on 3rd July, 2010.



8.6 FURTHER READINGS

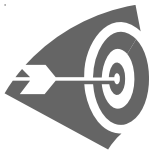
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8.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans. to Q. No. 1 : Doordarshan literally means Tele Vision.

Ans. to Q. No. 2 : DD-News channel on 3rd November 2003

Ans. to Q. No. 3 : DD Sports

Ans. to Q. No. 4 : Eurobird

Ans. to Q. No. 5 : Doordarshan has given high priority for the development of TV services in the North East. The hilly terrain in this part of the country makes it necessary to have a very large number of transmitters. There are 132 transmitters in the North East. There are 12 programme production Centres of Doordarshan in the North-East.

DD North East Channel is a composite satellite television service for the North Eastern states broadcasting programmes in Assamese, English and other languages and dialects of the North East. The programme mix includes entertainment serials, informative programmes, social

programmes, news and current affairs, art and culture.

Television studios have been established in the capital cities of all the seven states of Meghalaya, Manipur. Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. There are additional TV centres at Tura in the Garo Hills of Meghalaya and also at Dibrugarh & Silchar in Assam.

All these TV centres originate programmes for duration of 120 minutes on week days except DDK Guwahati. In addition, all the transmitters in the North East relay a composite programme originated from Guwahati which includes a news bulletin in English and a composite programme of interest to the people of all the North Eastern states. Satellite uplinking facilities have also been established in all the capital stations of the North East to facilitate feeding of news and other topical programmes to Guwahati and Delhi.

Ans. to Q. No. 6 : 1976

Ans. to Q. No. 7 : 1982

Ans. to Q. No. 8 : CNN

Ans. to Q. No. 9 : ZEE

Ans. to Q. No. 10 : NETV

Ans. to Q. No. 11 : News Live channel, owned by Pride East Entertainment Pvt. Ltd was launched on 21st January, 2008.



8.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q.1 : What was the primary focus of introducing television in India?

Q.2 : When was the regular daily transmission of Doordarshan started?

Q.3 : Which channel of Doordarshan is broadcast internationally through the medium of satellite?

Q.4 : What do you mean by AsiaSat?

Q.5 : Which is the oldest local news channel of North East India?

B) Short Questions (Answer each question in about 150 words)

Q.1 : Do you think the local channels of Assam face a stiff competition from the growth of other Indian private satellite channels? Explain.

Q.2 : Do you think the growth and development of electronic media in Assam has been slow in comparison to other Indian states? Justify your answer with examples.

C) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words)

Q.1 : Discuss the growth of private satellite channels in North East India.

Q.2 : What do you think has been the impact of private satellite channels on Doordarshan?

Q.3 : Analyse the growth of private satellite channels in Assam.

Q.4 : How has foreign satellite TV channels revolutionized the media scenario in India?

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