



Nepal flooded with FMs

FMs suffered serious setback during the royal regime. As the FMs were treated as “anti-government elements” during the royal regime, even the established FMs had to struggle hard to survive, let alone the new ones. The government could seize the broadcasting equipments of FM stations any time.

■ Rajendra Phuyal

With the restoration of democracy in the country, many entrepreneurs are eager to invest on FM radios. Some two-dozen of more than 100 applicants seeking FM license were given permission to operate it. This can be taken as a welcoming sign for the Nepalese society, which already leads South Asian nations in terms of running independent radios.

After a ministerial level decision, Star FM Kathmandu was granted operating license on the 28th of Shrawan, following it, 22 new FM stations have already received operating license till 25th of Bhadra. According to the ministry, several FMs are still in the pipeline.

The government has also allowed FMs to operate in remote districts,



including Humla, Achham, Pyuthan and Dailekh. In Dhanusha, four FMs were given operating license at a time. In Kathmandu— where already 13 FMs, including that of Radio Nepal were in operation— two more FMs were granted license. Also, two stations each in Dang, Makwanpur and Morang districts were allowed to operate the stations.

Of the 56 stations that received license earlier, 51 are currently in operation. 21 of them are run by community management.

In Kathmandu and some other towns where there is a rush of FM stations, homework on “rearrangement of the frequencies” is being done. With the introduction of new policies to encourage community-based media that suffered serious setbacks during the autocratic royal government, entrepreneurs are encouraged to invest in FMs. In a democratic system, radios

are considered as an effective means to create awareness among the masses.

Of the FMs, that recently received operating license, 15 are community-based. As the government has not categorized the FMs as community and commercial, all FMs have been given license on equal criteria. “Those FMs operating under 100 to 200 watts are considered as community FMs,” an officer at the Ministry of Information and communication, Shyam Chalishe said. “We have been trying to encourage such FMs (100 to 200 watt) at local levels.” FMs seeking license at the ministry range from 5 to 2,000 watt capacity.

The government is also planning to provide additional privileges to the non-commercial community radios. “To encourage small FM stations, we are doing homework to bring about political reforms,” Chalishe said. Radio activists have been demanding that



A team of International Press Mission holding an interaction with Maoist leaders Prachanda and Baburam in Kathmandu in early September.



International Press Mission holding a press meet in Kathmandu on the final day of its mission.



International Press Mission interacting with Nepali media persons.

PHOTOS: SAGAR SHRESTHA

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