

Home > Archive> Efe > Front page

Mauritius Tunes In To AIR FM



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In a significant development, India has bagged a contract to offer its All India Radio (AIR) FM services to Mauritius. This is for the first time that India has struck a deal of this nature with another country. Even as countries in Africa and Asia have recently begun receiving AIR FM programmes on satellite radio platform WorldSpace, the current deal with Mauritius will enable listeners to tune in to their normal FM radio sets for AIR programmes.

The contract with the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation has been approved by authorities of both the countries, and a memorandum of understanding (MoU) will be signed soon, according to AIR Resources head Dr HO Srivastava. If things go as planned, this service will take off within the next two months in Mauritius, said Dr Srivastava.

The AIR service will be offered for a fee, but the amount is under wraps right now. It will be a one-year deal to begin with. If both countries agree, they can extend it further. Besides the fee that AIR will be earning, the contract with Mauritius will also give a lot of exposure to Indian programmes and AIR.

But, the exposure doesn't translate into advertising revenues just yet. Dr Srivastava pointed out that neither the programmes nor the services can be changed or edited for Mauritius. So, even the India-specific ads will have to be carried on the AIR station in Mauritius. But it's possible that a system will be worked out at a later stage to insert ads relevant to the local population.

The AIR offerings will be a mix of FM1 and FM2 for Mauritius. With a large number of Indians living in Mauritius, the AIR programmes are likely to have high acceptability.

The FM service will be received by a transmitter located at Port Louis (Mauritius), which will then be re-transmitted there. The signal will be uplinked on PAS 10 satellite from India.

Apart from the recent satellite platform WorldSpace, AIR has been visible abroad only on short wave through its General Overseas Service. However, with India deciding to focus on FM frequency and phase out short wave gradually, the new contract with Mauritius looks significant. And if it's seen as a successful venture, India may talk to other countries for a similar endeavour.

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