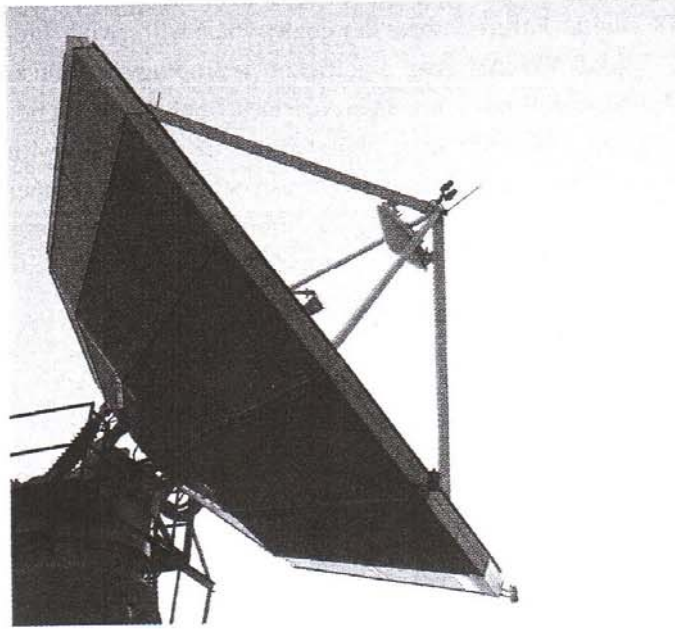


Digital Broadcasting

Nigerian Broadcasting Commission Urges Caution over Phone-in Programmes



THE Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) has advised broadcast stations to be careful in handling phone-in programmes and to desist from practices that will jeopardise security, peace, professionalism and national development.

The commission also expressed dissatisfaction with the excesses displayed by some radio and television stations in the way they handled phone-in and discus-

sion programmes on their channels.

At a conference organised by the NBC in Lagos, Director-General Yomi Bolarinwa urged the broadcasters to adopt best practices to curb the excesses observed in the presentation of some phone-in programmes in the nation's broadcast media.

"The aim of this parley is not to condemn any station. However, broadcasting live phone-in programmes without recourse to professionalism, fairness and balance in the contents has been disturbing. Broadcasting, corporate discussion is about pluralism, opinion and if issues are not represented, then you are not fair," he stated.

Broadcaster Kelvin Ejiofo said live programmes' anchors must show competence, be knowledgeable, carry out extensive research on topics under discussion and give all sides the opportunities to air their views.

Another broadcaster, Maria Odeh, noted that if well handled, phone-in programmes could be used as a tool for sensitising the society in the areas of health, education, food security, wealth creation

and poverty reduction.

"As we all agreed here, the phone-in as a programme format has come to stay and its value is the fact that it is interactive. It's an opportunity to give the people a sense of belonging, relevance and so such attributes must be strengthened and encouraged," she said.

According to Odeh, if wrongly handled, phone-in programmes could incite, create enmity and slander other people, which could lead to litigation.

"During the genocide in Rwanda, radio in particular was used as hate instrument to create enmity, discords and incited the different ethnic groups and in Kenyan post election violence, the medium was used to mobilise people to take to the streets," she added.

Another broadcaster, Sonny Irabor, concurred, describing live broadcasting as very exciting, but said it could also be traumatic if not handled well. "The host must be calm, calculated, alert and must be on top of the programme in order to avoid very embarrassing moment that could put the station and presenter into trouble," he advised. 🌐