

LACK OF VISION IN ALLOCATION OF RADIO LICENSES JULY 9, 2004

CCSJ is concerned that the recent allocation of radio licences by the Government exposes a hiatus between the Government's 2020 vision and strategies being adopted to achieve this vision.

While it is not clear what 'weight' was allocated to each of the criteria used by the Technical Team to arrive at their decisions, it is clear that of 6 criteria reportedly used by the Team, the following 3 in particular refer to the development of our nation:

1. The relative contribution of the proposed content package to the economic and social development of TT
2. The extent that the proposed content package will reflect and contribute to the development of T&T's identity and culture.
3. The contribution of the content package to the overall variety and range of programmes that will be made available in addressing the requirements of the various interest groups in TT.

We fail to see how religious groups that applied for licences will not have met the above criteria. Why, at a time when there is a dearth of morality and spirituality in our nation, does our Government not think it fit to grant licences to religious groups that have a proven track record of rendering yeoman service in T&T in so many ways? Indeed, some of the religious groups that applied for licences shore up the Government in myriad ways, particularly in the areas of education and social services delivery.

Human development includes a spiritual dimension. The omission of religious groups, that applied, as recipients of radio licences shows a lack of vision in the holistic approach that is vital to our nation if we are to promote human development.

If a decision was made to encourage religious groups to share one radio station on a time-share basis, why was this 'unstated' criterion not used in the entire process? Why was it not applicable to secular applicants?

Now, when the need is greatest, attempts are being made to stifle the voices of religious groups who continue to give unstinting service to our country.

CCSJ calls upon the Government to act inclusively and to rectify this serious error immediately by reviewing their decision and allocating radio stations to at least the major religious groups that applied and that have shown their intrinsic worth in promoting human development in T&T.