

# MACRA issues 15 broadcasting licenses

By Gregory Gondwe: @Kalipochi

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Malawi Communication Regulatory Authority (MACRA) has issued 15 broadcasting licenses to applicants who applied for them two years ago.



MACRA director general, Charles Nsaliwa said 22 applications have been successful but they will be doing the announcements in phases. He said in total, MACRA received 36 applications.

## "Broadcasting is powerful and sensitive"

"The process of awarding licenses involves the government as broadcasting is powerful and sensitive," said Nsaliwa. "To those of you who are not successful you should still wait when we will advertise next time," he added.

The awarding of licenses in this manner is a departure from the regime of president Bingu wa Mutharika who had decided to only give such licenses to those deemed to tow his political philosophy.

The Malawi chapter of Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA-Malawi) has applauded the administration of president Joyce Banda for upholding media freedom with the issuance of the licenses.

"I urge media houses to roll out within the stipulated time so that their licenses should not be revoked," advised MISA-Malawi chairperson, Anthony Kasunda. He told *The Daily Times* that this is a milestone in the history of broadcasting media in the country.

"MISA-Malawi advocates for media pluralism and we believe Malawians have a right to access information from a medium of their choice," said Kasunda, who paid tribute to president Banda for striving to live up to her pledge of respecting media freedom in the country.

## Television and radio licenses issued

MACRA announced on Wednesday, 25 July 2012, at a media conference, that it has issued television and radio licenses

to applicants.

Seven applicants have been awarded television licenses and they include Times Television owned by Times Group Company.

The others are Zodiak Television who already runs a radio, Zodiak Broadcasting Station (ZBS), Chancellor College Community of the University of Malawi, Adventist, Timveni, supported by Plan Malawi, Good News and Beta TV.

The eight applicants that have been awarded radio licenses include CCAP (Church of Central Africa Presbyterian) Blantyre Synod, CCAP Nkhoma Synod, CCAP Livingstonia Synod, Chancellor College Community, Matindi, Bua FM, Mwandama Community and Nyethepa.

## **Creates employment opportunities**

Kasunda said this development will create employment to media professionals and it is the expectation of the media institution to have all awardees rolling out within the stipulated period.

"We also expect them to operate within the parameters stipulated in their licenses to avoid crying foul when MACRA revokes their licenses for breach of Communications Act," stressed Kasunda.

At the event, Information Minister, Moses Kunkuyu said it is a clear manifestation that government has set its priority towards empowering Malawians through information and knowledge.

## **Diverse views guaranteed**

"Government will ensure diversity of views in the media is guaranteed," said Kunkuyu, adding that one of way of doing this will be continued granting of broadcasting licenses to independent television and radio stations.

"The liberalisation of broadcasting industry in the country is one of the less publicised goals of the current administration," he said.

Kunkuyu said for television stations they would be expected to be on air after 12 months while those that have been awarded radio licenses are expected to roll out within six months.

"The prospective broadcasters will officially have their licenses after being gazette following successful negotiations. Currently you still remain prospective broadcasters until we agree on do's and don'ts. It's from there we will proceed to gazette the licenses," Kunkuyu said.

Kunkuyu told the media gathering that MACRA will as soon as possible commence discussions with the awardees.

He said government will be expecting them to be on air within the time limit and they should therefore not complain when their licenses will be revoked due to failure to roll out within the agreed period.

"I urge you to make long term strategies that will ensure that your stations are well funded and sustainable," he advised.

## **ABOUT GREGORY GONDWE: @KALIPOCHI**

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