



Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago

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NEWS RELEASE

The Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (the Authority) has noted a number of inaccurate reports in the local print and electronic media about the role of the Authority regarding the programme “*Breaking Barriers*”, produced by Islamic Broadcasting Network (IBN) and carried on Channel 8 of Columbus Communications Trinidad Limited’s (CCTL) network.

In order to correct any misconceptions which may have been created as a result of the inaccurate reports, the Authority wishes to advise the public of the following;

1. In September 2005, **Roll On Roll Off Centre**, trading as **ROC**, wrote the Authority expressing an interest in obtaining a concession to provide a Cable Television Broadcasting Service. Mr. Inshan Ishmael was listed as the company’s Managing Director.
2. At that time the Authority was in the process of ‘regularising’ *existing* Cable Television Subscription Service broadcasters and completing its authorization framework to facilitate *new* Cable Television Subscription Broadcasting Service providers under the Telecommunications Act 2001.
3. The Authority held discussions with both ROC and CCTL, then Cable Company of Trinidad and Tobago (CCTT), in October 2005 concerning the request from ROC and emerging from those discussions was an agreement that ROC would provide content on CCTL’s network as a content provider.
4. **The Agreement on the content to be provided to CCTL by ROC was made solely between CCTL and ROC.**
5. **It should be noted that since the above arrangement was implemented ROC has not approached the Authority for a Cable Television Subscription Service Concession.**
6. In a letter received by the Authority on April 12th 2006, Mr. Inshan Ishmael, Chief Executive Officer of the Islamic Broadcast Network (IBN) expressed an interest in obtaining a concession to operate a “*free-to-air*” television service. Mr. Ishmael was advised by the Authority that applications were not being entertained

Board of Directors: Mr. Khalid Hassanali (Chairman); Mr. Cagney Casimire (Deputy Chairman); Ms. Beverly Beckles; Ms. Gillian Bishop; Mrs. Carol Clark; Dr. Ronald Ramkissoon; Mr. Learie Alleyne-Forte; Mr. Samuel Henry; Prof. St. Clair King; Mr. Wayne Nakhid; Dr. Shahid Hussain.
Executive Director: Dr. John Prince

for that service. *The Authority was not at that time, nor is it currently, entertaining from any entity, applications for new Concessions to provide “free to air” radio or television services.*

7. In the circumstances IBN continues to function as a content provider for CCTL. It should be noted that IBN is the only local entity on the cable network that does not hold a Concession from the Authority. CCTL is the broadcaster that holds the Concession and is therefore the party that is responsible to the Authority.
8. It is noted that the obligations of broadcasters, as far as the issue of content is concerned, is covered under Sections D8 and D9 of the Concession viz.

D8. The Concessionaire shall at all times in the provision of the Broadcasting Services comply with the provisions of the Broadcasting Code promulgated in accordance with the Act.

D9. Without prejudice to Condition D8, and until such time as a Broadcasting Code is promulgated in accordance with the Act, the concessionaire shall not:

- (a) transmit any programme, information or other material which degrades or portrays in a negative manner or discriminates against or encourages discrimination against any person or group by reason of race, origin, class, religion or sex;
 - (b) transmit any programme, information or other material which is hostile to any country; or,
 - (c) broadcast programme, information or other material which endangers the security of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, violates any law, is of a defamatory nature, is subversive to peace or public order or is otherwise contrary to the laws of Trinidad and Tobago.
9. Consequently, upon receipt of complaints about statements made on the programme titled “Breaking Barriers” on Channel 8 of CCTL’s network, *the Authority, commenced an investigation with CCTL in accordance with Section 18(1) m of the Telecommunications Act 2001 which states the following:*

... the Authority may exercise such functions and powers as are imposed on it by this Act and in particular ... investigate complaints by users, operators of telecommunications networks, providers of telecommunications and broadcasting services or other persons arising out of the operation of a public telecommunications network, or the provision of a telecommunications service or broadcasting service, in respect of rates, billings and services provided generally and to facilitate relief where necessary”

The Authority wishes to advise the public that the investigation currently being conducted with CCTL is not unusual and in fact, the Authority is ***currently in the process of conducting investigations against several broadcasters*** against whom complaints have been received.

The Authority wishes the public to note that it has had no communications of any kind with Islamic Broadcasting Network (IBN) on this matter.

It should also be noted that investigations into this matter with CCTL are still ongoing.

Further, the Authority wishes to assure the public that it would continue to carry out its functions in a non-discriminatory and transparent manner in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

January 30th 2007

END