

DTH adds depth to distance learning

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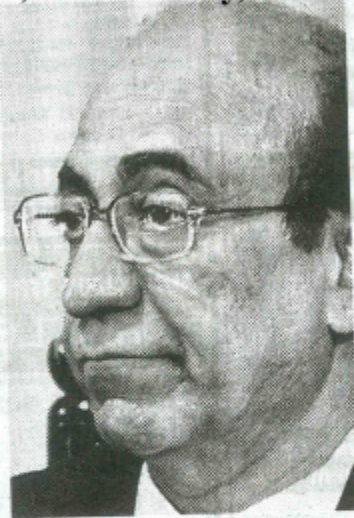
KOCHI, FEB. 2. Direct To Home telecast (DTH) and electronic journals have provided a new depth to distance learning and promise to integrate the disparate areas of our vast country into a seamlessly merged community of learners, says S. Ramani, Honorary Chairman of Information and Library Network Centre (INFLIBNET), Hyderabad, the Universities Grants Commission's library networking mission.

Education channel

The emergence of DTH telecast facility now enables even colleges to access the UGC's education channel in the bouquet of Doordarshan channels. "This is an exciting development," says Dr. Ramani.

He was speaking to *The Hindu* on the sidelines of the three-day Convention For Automation Of Libraries In Education And Research Institutes — CALIBER 2005.

After successfully networking over a 100 universities in the country, INFLIBNET is targeting



Dr. S. Ramani, Chairman, INFLIBNET.

colleges. They can now buy a reception facility at a cost of Rs. 7,000 and use it to receive the bouquet of DD channels, which now includes the education channel by the UGC.

Affordable rate

This breaks down the barriers of learning, as even the remotest college will be able to use the

facility at affordable rates, says Dr. Ramani, a veteran with the libraries networking mission and also the Director of Science and Technology with the HP Labs India, Bangalore.

The facility will enable a student, sitting in his remote classroom, look through a volcano or look down a microscope, says Dr. Ramani. "You can't take a volcano to a classroom," he adds with a smile on the capability of the new technology to improve classroom learning.

Dr. Ramani said ever since the UGC's Infonet mission got underway in December 2002, it had been a constant race to link universities. The emphasis was on "equity in quality". There should be no rural-urban discrimination when it came to the quality of education material and accessibility to them.

The first step was to use the V-SAT facility. Out of the about 170 universities affiliated to the UGC, 130 had been linked via the Internet. "The others will be linked and it is only a question of time," says Dr. Ramani. In the first instance itself, the UGC had succeeded in taking the Internet

revolution to the universities.

e-journals

The second step was to use the collective strength of these universities to access e-journals that were the very best sources of academic materials.

"If a researcher does not know what has been done before, he or she runs the chances of repeating the mistakes of the past or even duplicating efforts." He said e-journals had proved a costly affair for individual universities. Hundred universities had now pooled their resources to subscribe to 3,000 e-journals from all over the world covering all areas of academic interest. "The country spends Rs. 30 crores annually on these journals. However, the price fades into insignificance when you consider that these journals will soon be available to approximately four million students in the plus-two or above levels."

Dr. Ramani said that the UGC had identified about 65 colleges in the country to join the network through the satellite communication service.