

House team: Media Act is flawed

A parliamentary committee wants the Act amended as a matter of priority

BY PHILIP MWAKIO

A Parliamentary committee says the Media Act 2007 is flawed and must be amended.

The committee on Energy, Roads, Transport, Communication and Public Works also wants the Freedom of Information and ICT Bill fast-tracked.

The committee is of the view that the Bill is important and must be dis-

pensed with by Parliament as a matter of priority.

Committee chairman, Mr James Rege, while officiating at the closing of a two-day media stakeholders' workshop in Mombasa, yesterday, said the Act had gaps, which a newly launched taskforce must address.

KEY ISSUES

Key among the issues is the funding of the Media Council by the Exchequer.

Rege said there was need to ensure promotion of institutions that enhance professionalism, integrity and high standards. A team named over the weekend will look into the amendments of the Act.

"We hope that the taskforce will also look into any other matter related

to the enhancement of self-regulation of the media sector, as well as any other law that would enhance media freedom," Rege said.

On the ICT Bill, the committee supported the need to put into place eligibility criteria for awarding of broadcast licences.

Rege challenged the Communication Commission of Kenya to keep a register of frequencies open for public scrutiny.

He said the role of the public or State Broadcaster must be clarified.

"As the Act stands, it is only the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation that is declared as the public broadcaster, thus locking out other able broadcasters," he said.

The United Nations Development Programme and the Information and

Communication ministry partnership in the C4D (Communications for Development) programme funded the workshop.

ONE OF THE BEST

With the passing of the Media Act, KBC channel one, the Kenyan National Broadcaster will be put at par with other international recognised television broadcasters such as the BBC and SABC, KBC Managing Director David Waweru said during the workshop.

This will be made capable by the funding of non-commercial programmes by the Government, thus making KBC a more vibrant station.

The taskforce is expected to present its findings to the Minister of Information in two months time.