

Satellite dishes and human rights

THE decision to allow Ministers and deputy Ministers to buy satellite dishes from their furniture allowance (The Namibian, January 24) highlights inconsistencies in government information policy.

In this case, information is, quite rightly, being considered a priority and the state is therefore subsidising the purchase of satellite dishes, presumably so that Ministers and their deputies can keep in touch with world events. And yet the government continues to tax books and newspapers, which are the main source of information for many people in this country, particularly those who cannot afford satellite dishes. To put it crudely, the tax many thousands of people have to pay when buying reading material - books, newspapers and magazines, which are so important in a country grappling with widespread illiteracy - is being used to buy satellite dishes for a handful of politicians.

The freedom to seek, receive and impart information is a UNIVERSAL human right, and not a privilege. Media freedom certainly is not just about ministers getting satellite dishes free of charge, courtesy of the taxpayer. I would have thought a government which professes to have the welfare of the majority at heart, and which also claims to promote the free flow of information, should be aware of this.

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