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Deutsche Welle - AMIC
Seminar on
RADIO PROGRAMMING
IN A MULTIMEDIA AGE

COUNTRY PAPER - PAKISTAN

jointly organised by

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Deutsche Welle Radio Training Centre
Köln, Germany

and

<AMIC>
Asian Media Information
and Communication Centre (AMIC)

River View Hotel, Singapore
Radio Pakistan

The Voice of the Nation


By: Zamir Siddqui,
Station Director
PBC, Islamabad

Radio the oldest of the electronic media, serves more Pakistanis every day than any other source of Information, Education or Entertainment.

Born at the stroke of the midnight of 14th August 1947, Radio Pakistan has the privilege of announcing the birth of the sovereign state of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan the same night and the same stroke of the hour.

Radio Pakistan inherited only two transmitters of a total Power of 15 K.W. at Peshawar and Lahore from British India, which could cover 4.5% of the total area and 7% of the population.

Immediately after its creation (birth) the only mass medium of the people of Pakistan was assigned the most important job of re-union and re-habilitation of the people migrating from all the parts of India to settle in Pakistan their own homeland where they could live according to their culture and religion without any interference from others.

The meager transmission power could not restrict the unmatched enthusiasm and zeal of the Radio men and women in fulfilling the task and trust the people and the Government has given them. Radio broadcast 37000 messages in a day.
to help the people know about their Keth and Kin, places of shelter and reporting desks for rehabilitation purposes.

This assignment at one hand made Radio popular amongst the public and at the other hand it decided the role of Radio Pakistan as the "Voice of the Nation".

Starting with only 15 K.W. transmission power Radio Pakistan has now a power of 2621 KWs on medium wave, 1131 KWs on short Wave and 12 KWs on FM with a coverage potential of 95% of the population and 75% of the total area.

Radio Pakistan remained an attached department of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting until 1972. It was converted into statutory corporation under an act of law in 1972 known as act of the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation, retaining its call sign as Radio Pakistan.

Broadcasting in Pakistan has traditionally been based on the principle that it is a public service accountable to the public and its representatives. While retaining this essential element, it has embraced the principles of competition, advertising and choice. Three public bodies are at the helm of affairs.

This public of bodies works to broad requirements and objectives defined or endorsed by the Parliament, otherwise Radio Pakistan is independent in its day to day conduct of business.

They are:

- Ministry for Information and Media Development
- Standing Committee of National Assembly for broadcasting
- Standing Committee of the Senate for broadcasting.
The day to day affairs of Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation are managed by a Board of Directors headed by the Chairman Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation and Pakistan Television Corporation. The Chief Executive of Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation is the Director General who is assisted by Directors Programmes, News, Engineering, Administration and Finance.

HOME SERVICE

PBC broadcasts for about 400 hours daily from 24 Stations in 22 languages and dialects. The programmes include News and Current Affairs, religious Programmes Special Audience programmes such as Children, Women etc.

The broadcasts of PBC also includes daily 18 hours programmes for farmers providing them tips and expert’s advice on soil preparation, cultivation, harvesting and pest control. A good number of programme broadcast hours are also consumed in counseling for Population Welfare, Family Planning, Drug Abuse Rehabilitation and administering health and hygiene and also Environment protection and preservation.

The National Broadcasting Station at Islamabad operates for 41 hours a day, broadcasting, Religious Programmes, External, World Services FM-101 entertainment programmes and Internet live Radio.

NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

PBC broadcast 104 bulletins daily. The National bulletins in English and Urdu are broadcast on hourly basis and they are put on Internet too both in voice and text. Out of the 104 bulletins 82 bulletins are broadcast in home service for a total duration of 462 minutes daily. Whereas 15 bulletins are put on air for 97 minutes and 10 bulletins are put across in the World Services. 45 minutes are reserved for overseas slow speed bulletins.
The Current Affairs programmes broadcast by Central News Organisation of PBC in addition to the Current Affairs programmes produced by Programmes Wing include detailed news reports of domestic and international events, analytical reviews on current issues and news reports as well as resumes on parliamentary proceedings.

EXTERNAL SERVICES

The External Services of PBC started in 1949. Presently, PBC has 11 hours daily External broadcast in 15 Foreign Languages i.e. English, Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati, Russian, Hazarvi, Chinese, Indonesian, Tamil, Persian, Turkai, Turkish, Dari, Arabic and French.

The role of External Services project Pakistan’s views on national, regional and global issues besides portraying the progress in various fields on national and international level.

WORLD SERVICE

Pakistanis living abroad were deprived of the news, views, music and cultural activities of their homeland. Therefore PBC planned and started daily 12 hours service on short wave for Pakistanis living in Europe, Africa, Middle East and South East Asia. The programmes are broadcast in Urdu and English with mix of the regional languages to provide information and entertainment to the listeners. This also includes a language learning segment for the younger groups so that they can read and practice their own language and thus keep a touch with their motherland.

PBC SATELLITE SERVICE

Radio Pakistan has a daily broadcast of 18 hours on Satellite for 38 countries of Asia and Europe on 7.5 Mega Harts.
INTERNET LIVE RADIO

PBC added Internet Live Radio Service for its consumers who could not receive Radio signals abroad or could not enjoy good listening due to atmosphere interferences. This service started from November 15, 1998. Earlier the News bulletins of Radio Pakistan were available on Internet both in text and radio. The live radio can be heard on www.radio.gov.pk

PBC SPORTS CHANNEL

PBC has an exclusive sports channel which broadcasts all National and International sports activities including direct broadcast of major activities such as Cricket, Hockey, Football, Tennis, Squash and other games.

FM – 101 (ENTERTAINMENT SERVICES)

After the dish culture, FM has taken every one to a mini storm, specially the younger lot throughout the world. It has become a popular jukebox amongst all age groups, all over the places where the young ones have the opportunity to gether, may it be a college lawn or it is a common sight.

In view of the public interest in FM broadcasts Radio Pakistan started giving its frequencies in 1988 to the listeners just on experiment basis.

However in 1994 PBC started FM Entertainment Service for a few limited hours and slowly increased its broadcast hours.

In 1995 a private FM radio was established in there major cities of Pakistan under license from the Government. This swept away all the gentry irrespective of age and listening taste.

Radio Pakistan, therefore, had to reorganize its programme fare to compete with the private radio channel with commercial motives.
Radio Pakistan too replanned its programmes and came up with its new FM – 101 Channel. The channel has totally new style of presentation and programes. Pakistan’s most read English Daily Dawn comments on FM – 101 and I quote “You need not to be an ardent listener but once you listen FM – 101, it steals the heart and takes you to applause. The new FM – 101 is gaining ground amongst the listeners through talk back on telephone calls, special request items played instantly or a bit better, lively skits and jokes. It is putting some great numbers that make The listeners to put on the dancing shoes”. Unquote; Besides, providing entertainment FM – 101 is also providing various types of information like health, cooking, make up tips for ladies and even literary items and also news, current affairs and sports.

The popularity of FM – 101 helped for better services. They came up with the unique idea of extra curricular broadcast for students on FM – 88 Channel.

FM – 88 STUDENT’S CHANNEL

Radio Pakistan established a FM – 88 students channel, in its broadcasting Academy, Islamabad in November, 1998 to provide a platform to the students to plan, write, produce and present their own programmes to develop confidence in public speaking skills.

The channel has uptil now attracted young listeners who earlier used either to watch cartoons on dish or waste their time in activities some times most unhealthy for them. Uptil now more than 800 students from 45 schools have participated in FM – 88 broadcasts.

PAKISTAN BROADCASTING ACADEMY

No organisation can maintain its professional efficiency without highly skilled manpower. PBC has its own training Academy. The Academy provides induction and specialize courses to PBC staff and artists in programming, news and current affairs and radio engineering. The Academy also runs International training programmes in collaboration with Foreign Training
Agencies like Asia Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development, Kualalumpur, Malaysia, Duetche Welle, Germany and Common Wealth Broadcasting Association.

NATIONAL SOUND ARCHIVES AND CENTRAL PRODUCTIONS

Radio Pakistan has a chain of three Central Programme Production Units to meet the Programme Production requirement specially National and Regional Music for use by Radio Pakistan and distribution to sister organisations abroad. The Central National Archives at the PBC Headquarters, Islamabad maintains a sound library of 10,11, 236 minutes of recorded material to preserve the culture, tradition, music of the country in sound for future references and use.

RADIO PROGRAMMING AND EXPECTED CHANGES

The fast growing Information technology has posed a question in the minds of the radio broadcast planners about the fate of radio in the next millenium. A great deal of work has been done in many countries including Pakistan to decide that which type of programme planning will flourish in the year 2000 and beyond?

The radio experts are of the opinion that satellite services will make cross-frontier broadcasting desirable for commercial operators in search of wider consumer markets for commercial profits. But, the radio listening is a very personal activity and any tight targeting will only satisfy some of the listeners for some of the time. Therefore public service broadcasters have the opportunity to provide services for most of their potential audience all of the time.

It is a fact that given good quality reception, the future of radio depends on the content of programmes. The content of programmes can only be decided if the programmer knows the needs of his or her listener at various times of the day, say for example getting up, driving to work, having come from the school, a rest after the days work, looking for an alternative to TV, working in night.
To decide upon the listeners' need and listening patterns Radio Pakistan is presently conducting a survey through Gallop International in Pakistan to provide basic data to programmers to plan their activities.

The decreasing Socio Economic Scenario on the global level due to disbalance in power, injustice, increase in population and similar factors and role of media in present day social-economic context has changed specially in societies of the developing countries like Pakistan.

Today one of the main objectives of radio is to create awareness and to motivate people for change in behavioral patterns for proper understanding of the opportunities and constrains offered by the changing international situation”.

The year 2000 is the bridge to the 21st century life style and standards. Therefore, the role and responsibility of media specially Radio to prepare people through its programmes to meet the challenges of the next century by: -

- Developing a reasonably competent and honest public service.
- Maximum investment in Education and research.
- Ability to take advantage of emerging opportunities.
- Responsible Economic and Financial systems and institutions.
- A culture of savings, investments and exports.
- Partnerships between Public and Private sectors and the citizens.
- Creating a balance in Modernization and National culture according to the principles of religion.
- Self-reliance.
- Competing with challenge of the modern.
Radio can play an important role in Economic take off by inculcating the idea of:

- Culture of high savings and investments.
- Creating scientific infrastructure.
- Relying upon self-employment than to depend on Government employments.
- Agriculture and industrial manufacturings.
- Increased financing in cooperative Industries and exports.
- Live stock and forest development.
- Sense of participation in national economic growth.

As already mentioned, the success of radio will depend on the quality of the reception by the listeners. Radio Pakistan has therefore planned to change its gadgets with new digital and DAB systems. Some digital transmitters and equipments have already been procured at a cost of 640 million Rupees. Another plan of modernisation of broadcast equipments amounting of Rs. 1,706 million is underway.

PROBLEMS FORESEEN AND RESPONSES

No doubt the modern communication technology and informatics have played tremendous role in the general development of the mankind but this has been also of great concern to the people especially in developing countries like Pakistan. The commercial intents of the media owners have never thought about the negative impact of programmes, on culture, music, fashion and other social aspects. The films, cartoons and talk shows have changed the habit, likes and dislikes of the people to an extent that people specially younger group have forgotten their music tradition and culture. They are
switching over to a foreign culture which itself is foreign to the foreign media owners. As a result the behavioral pattern of the people in general and teenagers in particular has changed adversely effecting their education, believes and social norms.

This is a challenge, which the programmers are facing in developing countries and they have to find out some corrective measures through their programme fare to put back the people on the tracks of the social environment they belong to.

This is possible only if we maintain a balance between tradition and development both in social and economical sectors.

The public service broadcasting can do this job through community and local network by adapting new approaches to assure that radio will retain its importance in the media landscape of the 21st century.

Thank you.