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<td>Sharif, A. R.</td>
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Radio Bangladesh & Bangladesh Television

By

A R Sharif
Mr Chairman,

Dear Fellow Broadcasters, Ladies and Gentlemen

You have been very kind to allow me to speak to this distinguished gathering of broadcasters from Asia. This is a rare privilege and I thank you very cordially for this generosity. I take this opportunity to convey to you the best wishes and greetings from my colleagues in Radio Bangladesh. I would also convey my special thanks to the Asian Mass Communications Research and Information Centre and Deutsche Welle Radio Training Centre who sponsored this workshop. I have also a word of gratitude for the organisers including Mr Vijay Menon, Secretary General of AMIC and Dr. Anura, Senior Programme Specialist, Research Programme of the AMIC.

Radio in Bangladesh is now over 50 years old and Television almost 30 years. Both Radio and Television have celebrated their Golden and Silver Jubilee with much fan-fare and festivity and, of course, with a rare sense of pride for achievement.

Both Radio and Television are governed by a single authority viz the National Broadcasting Authority headed by a Chairman. Below the Chairman, there are 2 Director Generals, 1 for Radio another for Television. There are 2 Deputy Director Generals for Radio and Television each and below them over dozen Directors and twice as many Deputy Directors for each of them. In short, we have to meet management needs for over 850 employees in the Radio hierarchy alone. Details of the hierarchy could be seen from the organogram attached to this paper.

Radio now broadcasts from our six stations a total of about ninety hours' daily programme in our home and external services. We broadcast 28 news bulletins daily, 22 being in the home service and the rest in external service in 6 languages. We also telecast 4 news bulletins covering a total duration of one and a half hour daily.

Every broadcaster gets initial training at the National Institute of Mass Communication which is the apex training centre for media-man working in programme, News and Engineering sections of Radio & TV. The institute has facilities for conducting training courses seeking to provide practical skill, technical knowledge and other professional know-how. But it doesn't provide any training for personnel management organisation and development. This job is done by the Public Administration Training Centre in the vicinity of the capital without any special attention to personnel management in Broadcasting or Special requirements for Radio or other mass media in the country.
As you all know broadcasting is a very demanding profession. Our listeners are varied and their demands are more diverse now than at any other time in the past. They want to be informed about everything, they want to listen to folk song, jazz, rock and roll, while others want classical music. They want to gaze beyond stars and know about the realities of star-wars. Their demands range from health capsule to sermons on salvation after death. This is indeed a monstrous demand. A broadcaster has to rise upto this hydra-headed monster. Hence the need for effective management at all levels and tiers.

Mr Chairman, as a professional in Radio Bangladesh for over three decades, I must confess, I never tried to manage by dictating, nor even by trying to prevail over those who worked under me. I have always let them feel that we are all members of a work-team dedicated to a purpose. I preferred to remain as one among them, rather than being one above them. Instead of getting them along with me, I tried to be all along with them, once I was sure they were driving towards achieving the goals set for the organisation.

 Broadcasting, like all other organisations, has its own set of goals and ideals and every professional has to have a professional commitment towards achievement of these goals. There may be difference in the way of carrying out this commitment, but, commitment itself has to be universal and without exception. Of course, the man on the job can bring some qualitative change in the ways and methods of realising the goal. Individual genius and superior perception can undoubtedly go a long way to help achieve professional goals quicker and easier. To attract people with talent and genius, total career development in B'casting should not be governed by the straight-jacket of govt. rules and regulation. Personnel recruitment for this sensitive industry should be governed by rules appropriate to its own requirements. Talented people can't be hired by the usually meagre salaries given by the govt. It is only the talented Manager who can be intimately and effectively involved in the development of those standards that apply to a certain organisation.

The question of training and of professionalising Asian Broadcasting at this time of political and social upheavals has to be seen from contexts of rapid changes in the realities of Socio-political situation in Asian Countries. We cannot afford to still carry on western traditions, that we have been used to in the colonial days. The concept of freedom of communication, the right of everybody to be informed and the role of the broadcaster in the context of this conceptual change developed a completely new responsibility on the shoulders of the trainer. Freedom of broadcasting, like the freedom of the Press requires a cultural transformation which presupposes the idea of communication-freedom being indispensable for social progress. Both the ruler and the ruled will have to accept it as essential for development. But this freedom often faces threat more from
within than from without. The internal threat comes from a situation where the broadcaster’s freedom is not connected with his responsibilities to the society. The trainers job is to awaken the broadcaster to this responsibility.

In Bangladesh where we had a general election on the 27th of Feb. last. a new govt. committed to democracy and development will soon start functioning after nine years of autocratic rule. We are now passing through an important phase of our national transformation, we want to hasten this process with the help of trained manpower, with sophisticated and advanced knowledge in all key areas and sectors related to national development. We need specialised training particularly in the area of mass communication. To that end, AMIC’s role could be exemplary. Besides specialised training, it could meet our shortage of trained personnel at medium and junior levels. Most of our mediamen at these levels have little information or exposure to new techniques of broadcast management. They are also to be trained in areas of personnel management. On our part, we could provide AMIC with instructors at senior level for Programme and News Planning, Editing and Production, Project Planning and implementation.

We strongly feel that a curriculum for training should be evolved with adaptability to accommodate continuing social changes. One of its aims should be to help and instruct students in their role as critics of society and raise their awareness to the needs of local training at the medium technical level but also specialised courses for the training of trainers.

AMIC may also like to promote research and evaluation in all aspects of communication training including effects of mass communication on society and prospectives for the future.

Finally, to promote the quality of personnel management, AMIC may like to institute awards for Best Radio and Television Managers in Asian Countries.

I now conclude wishing all the best for this conference. Before I take my seat, I would like to convey to you once again the best wishes and cordial greetings from my colleagues in the Mass Media in Bangladesh.

Thank you very much.