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Broadcast Management 2000:
Country Paper - Sri Lanka

By

V N Mathialagan
and
Colin Jayaweera
Seminar on
"BROADCAST MANAGEMENT 2000 - PROGRAMME TRENDS AND
PERSONNEL & DEVELOPMENT

(AMIC Secretariat, Singapore 6 - 10 December 1993

COUNTRY PAPER * SRI LANKA

by

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Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation
Colombo 7, Sri Lanka
August 1993
1. Sri Lanka - Basic Data:– Sri Lanka, known as the pearl of the Indian Ocean is situated near the Southern tip of India, the closest neighbour of Sri Lanka.

2. Area:– 65,610 sq.km (25,332 sq.miles)
   Topography:– The coastal area and the Northern half are flat and the South Central area is hilly and mountainous.

   Out of the above 17.2 millions, 21.5% Urban population.
   Population density (per sq.km) is 245. The growth rate is 1.8.

4. Ethnic groups:– There are three Major ethnic groups living in Sri Lanka.
   They are:– Sinhalese – 74.0%
   Tamils – 18.1%
   Muslims – 7.1%
   Others – 0.8%
   The Sinhalese speak sinhala and the Tamils and Muslims speak Tamil.
   Sinhala and Tamil Are optional language and English, the link language is widely used.
   There are four major communication systems in Sri Lanka.
   No. of TV sets – 10,00000
   No. of Radio sets – 3 million
   No. of telephone – 2,00000
   No. of Daily News Papers – 20 (registered)
   Literacy rate is comparatively very high in the 3rd World countries.
   Males: 90.5%  Females: 83.0%

Country Paper – Sri Lanka

History of Broadcasting in Sri Lanka:– During the era that audio broadcasting emerged in Europe, a few radio enthusiasts in Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) in 1922 formed the Ceylon Amateur Radio Society.

Barely a few months after the opening of the British Broadcasting Company, the Ceylon Telegraph Department was able to build a transmitter from parts recovered from a captured German Submarine and with spares belonging to a telegraph transmitter. With this transmitter experiments were conducted.

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The first experimental public demonstration was on the 22nd of February 1924. And the last was on the 27th of July the same year. Thereafter programmes were broadcast twice or thrice a week on an irregular basis. Subsequently a new transmitter was indented for and the new transmitter was commissioned.

A regular broadcasting service was officially inaugurated on the 16th December 1925. This day mark the Birthday of Broadcasting in Sri Lanka, first Broadcasting Station established in the east.

Until 1949 broadcasting was administered by the Department of Posts & Telecommunication. In 1949 a separate Department of Broadcasting was set up under the Government of Ceylon. The call sign was "Radio Ceylon".

In 1940 Rural Broadcasting has been already emerged. In 1967 Radio Ceylon was elevated as a State Corporation and was known as Ceylon Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) from 1967 the CBC was given the responsibility of promoting public service broadcasting system as a means of information, education, entertainment and specifically development. When the name of Ceylon was changed to Sri Lanka in 1972 the CBC became SLBC (Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation).

3. National Programme Policies and Perspectives
The Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation is entrusted with the responsibility of promoting a public service broadcasting system as a means of information, education, entertainment, communication and specifically development.

The SLBC broadcasts in three main languages - Sinhala, Tamil and English. There are limited broadcasts for overseas listeners in Hindi, English, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam. The programmes are originated up to August 1993 from a single studio complex in Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka. A new multipurpose studio was opened in August this year with more facilities and modern technology necessary to broadcast effective programmes. There are three regional broadcasting services at provincial town of Annuradhapura, Matara and Kandy. One of the recent development is the establishment of Community Radio Centres.

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First in this series, was inaugurated in Girandurukotte, an area within the overall project of the Mahaweli Community Radio (MCR). With the expansion of activities, broadcasting administration has become a more vital co-ordinating link than ever before.

Radio, as a medium of mass communication has proved and remained the most powerful and indeed the most effective form of communication throughout the world. In Sri Lanka this position has been challenged with the establishment of the National Television (Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation) in 1982 coupled with a limited coverage provided by Independent Television Network (ITN). Recent times witnessed the establishment of several TV & Radio stations. Teyshen Network limited (TNL), Tel visio and TNL Radio, Extra Terrestrial vision (ETV), Maharaja Television (MTR), FM 99 (Radio). These recent development in the electronic media demands innovative approaches fresh and thinking on matters of programme for radio, if radio has to retain its present listenership.

4. Problems and Difficulties to be solved:
The need for modern equipment requires no emphasis. The SLBC had been saddled with the question of replacing obsolete equipment. With the opening of the New Studio Complex donated by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in August 1993 this problem has been overcome to some extent. This new multi purpose studio complex gives modern broadcasting systems with the latest technology available. The SLBC has to embark on a further programmes of modernization in order to remodel and redesign its transmission network to active high quality broadcasting, for the maximum listening pleasure of the island wide audience.

5. Future programmes for broadcast development
Due to the rising power cost, SLBC finds it difficult to maintain the various medium wave transmitting stations spread through out the island. Therefore an FM broadcast (city FM) had been already commenced. With the new studio complex we hope to open more FM channels.

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Sri Lanka is a heterogeneous society, in terms of Ethnicity, Culture, Religion, Literacy, likes and dislikes. These are prime considerations in programming. Amidst this diversity, there is uniqueness of rich cultural heritage. The future programmes will be aimed at supporting and stimulating to National Culture. This medium will be made available to our great artistes, performers and writers to enrich our knowledge and experience through their contributions in drama, music, art and other fields.

The great traditions and standards they maintain will help us to develop new and innovative talents of the next generation of our artistes. We propose to encourage a learning society through formal, informal, and non-formal education programmes.


Personnel for the programme staff are recruited according to the schemes of Recruitment stipulated by the Government.

In most instances university graduates who have specialised in different subjects are selected. Persons with the knowledge of Historical, Cultural and Religious background and current affairs are given preference. Sometimes people who have outstanding talents are taken though they do not have the required educational qualification.

Although SLBC has a Training Institute, it is not geared to train all staff due to lack of equipment and expertise. There are 16 senior administrators, 29 Engineers, 328 technicians and 65 programme producers. These numbers are far below to approved cadres. These cadres will be filled, says the new Chairman and the Director General of SLBC. We have been relying on outside assistance for this purpose, specially from Japan, West Germany, Britain and ABID and ABU.

Most domestic needs will be fulfilled by updating the Training Institute.