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A Message To Friends From Radio Circles Of Various Countries

By

Zhang Hexian
A Message to Friends from Radio Circles of Various Countries

Ladies and gentleman,

As a representative of Radio Beijing, the People’s Republic of China, I am very glad to come to the beautiful garden city of Singapore and join my colleagues from various countries at the workshop on audience research hosted by AMIC. First of all, let me extend, on behalf of Madame Cui Yuling, Director of Radio Beijing, cordial regards to the organizers of the workshop and warm greetings to friends from various countries.

Now, allow me to brief you on Radio Beijing and its audience relations service.

Radio Beijing is the only radio station in China transmitting programmes worldwide. Run by the government, it strives to serve the people of the world, give accurate and timely coverage of happenings and developments in China and other parts of the world, give true pictures of China, explain in simple and clear terms China’s major policies and propositions, deepen the understanding of China by the people of other countries and enhance the friendship between the people of China and other parts of the world. It operates to the benefit of the friendship and unity among the peoples and the cause of peace and progress.

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Radio Beijing has experienced 39 years of evolution since it inaugurated the English-language service on September 11, 1947. Today, it has approximately 1,000 reporters, editors, translators and announcers. Every day Radio Beijing broadcasts worldwide in 38 foreign languages and in Putonghua (standard Chinese) and four local Chinese dialects — Guangzhou, Hakka, Amoy and Chaozhou dialects. In 1984, Radio Beijing launched the Capital Service — an English-language service for foreigners in the Beijing area. This programme is being rebroadcast in Shanghai, Guangzhou and some other major cities in China. Radio Beijing transmits programmes with a total of 141 hours a day.

To give a timely coverage of events across the world, Radio Beijing has local bureaus in the provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions all over China and overseas bureaus in Japan, the United States, France, Yugoslavia, Pakistan, Mexico, Federal Germany and Hong Kong.

Radio Beijing has extensive connections in the world and close business ties and relations of cooperation with radio stations in other countries. Over the past 30 years and more, Radio Beijing has sent programmes to or exchanged programmes with radio stations in more than 50 countries by post. In recent years, Radio Beijing has established regular relations with radio stations in a number of
countries, affording a constant supply of programmes by telephone or by post. Radio Beijing has also increased the exchange of visits and experience with radio circles in other countries over the years. It has received radio delegations from many countries and visited radio stations in other countries.

Over the past 30 years and more, China's overseas broadcasts have been well received by listeners across the world. During recent years in particular, the political stability in China, the smooth progress of the country's economic development, the steady improvement of the people's livelihood and the implementation of the policy of opening to the outside world have aroused immense interest among the people of various countries. The number of people listening to Radio Beijing is increasing from year to year. Radio Beijing receives about 100,000 letters from listeners in more than 150 countries and regions every year. The letters contain congratulations on China's achievements in socialist construction, report on reception conditions or put forward suggestions for better programming. These letters reveal, between the lines, best wishes and profound friendship for the Chinese people.

To do a good job in audience relations, Radio Beijing has the Audience Relations Department which works out
unified planning for audience relations and supervises and
cconducts work in this regard. However, concrete operations
are handled directly by the various departments and sections
which are in charge of programming.

Each department or section has special personnel or a
special group handling letters from listeners, registering
letters and replying to letters in time. Questions of a
general nature put forward in the letters are usually
answered on the air. Many questions are answered by letters.
Important comments are forwarded in good time to the
departments concerned for study and consideration.
Sometimes we send letters to listeners on our initiative,
asking them to listen to certain programmes prepared upon
the listeners' request. Some departments and sections send
letters of greetings to listeners on the eve of a festival
in compliance with the customs and habits of the countries
concerned. To solicit opinions from the listeners on an
extensive scale, many departments and sections send
questionnaires to listeners from time to time, inquiring
about their age, sex, occupation, hobby, the programmes
they like and their opinions and suggestions for
programming.

Over the past few years, Radio Beijing has paid more
attention to audience relations and investigation with
regard to audiences. Radio programming is closely linked
with listeners. Radio programmes are prepared for people to listen to and they should be liked by the listeners. So it is necessary to understand the listeners of different countries, different strata, different party affiliations, different occupations, different sexes and different ages. We solicit their opinions and suggestions and get to know their wishes and requests through various channels. Every year we send reporters and trainees to other countries. They manage to find time to visit listeners and collect their opinions. Now, a great many foreigners come and visit China and a considerable number of them are our listeners. They are our targets of investigation who come to us by themselves. In the course of their interviewing, our reporters also collect reactions to our programming. Another method we apply is to send questionnaires to listeners. During recent years, we have sent questionnaires to more than a dozen countries. The various departments and sections of Radio Beijing send out such questionnaires to listeners irregularly in light of the specific circumstances. Our questionnaire covers the listener's sex, age, occupation, family, his reception conditions, how often he listens to Radio Beijing every week, how many minutes he listens to us each time, the optimum time of reception, the special programme he likes
best, his appraisal of our announcers, what aspects of China he is most interested in, his suggestions, wishes and requests for Radio Beijing, and so on. Aside from the general questionnaires, the Urdu Section has sent special questionnaires to 78 DX clubs to inquire about the date of the establishment of each DX club, its membership and its activities. The Turkish Section solicits opinions from listeners concerning its own special programmes. Last year, the Tamil Section sent out 650 questionnaires and recovered 432 of them. The Japanese Department sent out 5,000 questionnaires and received 1,558 replies. A great many listeners conscientiously filled the various items in the questionnaires. An analysis of 1,000 questionnaires recovered by the Japanese Department indicates that in terms of sex, men account for the majority; in terms of age, young people below the age of 24 make up the overwhelming majority of the listeners and in terms of occupation, the number of high school students is the greatest. These figures have enabled us to see more clearly that youth and children are the main listeners in Japan. With the clear target in mind, the Japanese Department has paid more attention to the listeners' interest and other characteristics and designed special programmes
suited to the needs of these listeners. Take the 3-S Special Programme for example. The 3-S refers to three words each having S as the first letter, namely, sports, stamps and screen. Since its inauguration, the 3-S Special Programme has been acclaimed enthusiastically by Japanese youth and children who send in the greatest number of letters as compared with other listeners in Japan.

Through the investigation of our listeners over the past few years, we have discovered that although the listeners in various countries are different in sex, age, occupation and educational background and they are of different countries, different strata and different affiliations, they share a broad interest in China, from historical events to the life of reality, from political matters to economic aspects, from culture and education to literature and art, from geography and landscape to customs and habits, from the Taiwan issue to the Hong Kong issue..... This indicates that our listeners intend to know about "New China in various aspects. The departments and sections of Radio Beijing prepare a great variety of special programmes in light of the different requests of the listeners. We have more than a hundred special

We have also visualized from the statistics we gained from investigation that most of our listeners are interested in Chinese history, the people's life, China's economic reform and China's achievements. To satisfy the listeners' requests, the various departments and sections of Radio Beijing are making greater efforts to widen their coverage of Chinese life and deal with more topics about China so as to provide a panoramic picture of Socialist China.

Radio Beijing keeps gifts from listeners and letters which have a rich content. Exhibitions of letters and gifts from overseas listeners have been held in Beijing.

Radio Beijing also forges ties with listeners by way of broadcasts. More than 20 departments and sections have "Listeners' Letterbox" programmes. They answer questions from listeners and present music at the listeners' request. Radio Beijing also invites listeners to take a direct part in such programmes, enabling them to conduct the exchange of thoughts and feelings through the radio waves of Radio Beijing. Some departments and sections help listeners look for their dear ones by way of radio waves.

Every year Radio Beijing receives many visiting
listeners' delegations and individuals, asking them to visit Radio Beijing and have discussions and other exchanges with staff members of Radio Beijing. Sometimes, we invite listeners to deliver speeches on the air.

Every year Radio Beijing produces a great many souvenirs with Radio Beijing's marks, such as picture books, calendars, programme schedules, verification cards, pins as well as bags, note-books, bookmarks and pennants. These exquisite souvenirs, popular among overseas listeners, help to strengthen our ties with listeners and promote our programmes as well.

We are making constant efforts to further improve our work of audience relations so as to serve the people of the world even better.

To enhance the friendship between Radio Beijing and our counterparts in other countries, we are ready to strengthen cooperation, forge ties and exchange experience with friends from various countries.

In conclusion, I wish the workshop a complete success. Thank you.