AIR: Growth & Development

**Introduction**

Radio as a communication medium has played a very important role in the economic, political and cultural development of nations. It has the unique advantage of being receivable through low cost,, affordable for almost everyone, even in the rural areas.

The phenomenal growth achieved by All India Radio through decades has made it one of the largest media organizations in the world. Today AIR reaches out to 99.18% of the population spread over about 91.85% of the area through 262 broadcasting Centres.

Radio broadcasting in India began as a private venture in 1923 and 1924, when three radio clubs were established in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras (now Chennai). The Radio Club broadcast the first radio programme in India in June 1923. The daily broadcasts of 2 to 3 hours consisted mainly of music and talks. These stations had to close down in 1927 for lack of sufficient financial support.

The successful growth of radio in Europe and the United States gave impetus to a young group of Indian entrepreneurs, who established the Indian Broadcasting Company in 1927.

The Government acquired Indian Broadcasting Company in 1930 and constituted the Indian Broadcasting Service under the Department of Labour and Industries. Since then, broadcasting in India has remained under Government control.

In 1935, Lionel Fielden was appointed the first Controller of Broadcasting. In 1936, he renamed the Indian State Broadcasting Service as All India Radio. In 1937, AIR came under the Department of Communications and four years later came under the Department of Information and Broadcasting. The Central News Organisation (CNO) came into existence in August, 1937.

Radio broadcasting assumed considerable importance with the outbreak of World War II. By 1939, the entire country was covered by a short-wave service and the programme structure underwent a change to meet wartime contingencies. During this period, news and political commentaries were introduced and special broadcasts were made for the people on the strategic northeastern and northwestern borders.

**After Independence**

When India attained independence, there were six radio stations in India, at Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Tiruchirapalli and Lucknow. There were three in Pakistan (Peshawar, Lahore and Dacca). AIR then had a coverage of just 2.5 % of the area and 11% of the population.

In the following year of independence, CNO was split up into two divisions, the News Services Division (NSD) and the External Services Division (ESD).

In 1956 the name AKASHVANI (voice from the sky) was adopted for the National Broadcaster.

The Vividh Bharati Service was launched in 1957 with popular film music as its main component. It was the first exclusive commercial channel to compete with the equally successful Radio Ceylon, which is the oldest radio station in Asia.

In 1967 Commercials on Vividh Bharati introduced.

In 1969 Yuv-Vani service started from Delhi.

In 1976 Doordarshan separated from AIR.

In 1977 First ever FM Service was inaugurated from Madras.

In 1985 Commercials on Primary Channel introduced

In 1985 Introduction of hourly news bulletins

1988 : Introduction of National Channel

The resurgence of Radio actually took place in India in 1995 with the commencement of FM broadcast by AIR, where some slots were given to private producers. FM stations of AIR have also grown over the years. At the start of VIIth Plan, there were only 4 AIR FM stations in the country. At the end of VIIIth Plan, 98 FM stations were in operation which was further increased to 130 at the end of IXth Plan and 161 at the end of the Xth Plan.

As on date, there are more than 200 AIR FM stations all over the country.

Other major developments include Launching of AIR on-line Information Service on Internet in 1996 , Audio in real time on Internet Service started in 1997, Prasar Bharati Corporation came into existence, in 1997, Radio on Demand’ Service on 2nd FM Channel in 1998, AIR news on telephone, live on internet in 1998 , launching of Infotainment channels in 2001 in FM-II,

Marketing Division of Prasar Bharati inaugurated In 2003 , DTH service In 2004

The phenomenal growth achieved by All India Radio has made it one of the largest media organisations in the world.

Today it has a network of 262 radio stations, and accessible to almost the entire population of the country and nearly 92% of the total area.

A broadcasting giant, AIR today broadcasts in 23 languages and 146 dialects catering to a vast spectrum of socio-economically and culturally diverse populace.

Programmes of the External Services Division are broadcast in 11 Indian and 16 foreign languages reaching out to more than 100 countries. These external broadcasts aim to keep the overseas listeners informed about developments in the country and provide a rich fare of entertainment as well.

The News Services Division, of All India Radio broadcasts 647 bulletins daily for a total duration of nearly 56 hours in about 90 Languages/Dialects in Home, Regional, External and DTH Services.

314 news headlines on hourly basis are also being mounted on FM mode from 41 AIR Stations.

AIR operates at present 18 FM stereo channels, called AIR FM Rainbow, targeting the urban audience in a refreshing style of presentation.

In keeping with the Government decision for transition to the digital mode of transmission, AIR is switching from analog to digital in a phased manner. With the target of complete digitization by 2017, the listeners can look forward to highly enhanced transmission quality in the near future.