

History of All India Radio

Growth & Development

Broadcasting in India actually began about 13 years before AIR came into existence. In June 1923 the Radio Club of Bombay made the first ever broadcast in the country. This was followed by the setting up of the Calcutta Radio Club five months later. The Indian Broadcasting Company (IBC) came into being on July 23, 1927, only to face liquidation in less than three years.

In April 1930, the Indian Broadcasting Service, under the Department of Industries and Labour, commenced its operations on an experimental basis. Lionel Fielden was appointed the first Controller of Broadcasting in August 1935. In the following month Akashvani Mysore, a private radio station was set up. On June 8, 1936, the Indian State Broadcasting Service became All India Radio.

The Central News Organisation (CNO) came into existence in August, 1937. In the same year, AIR came under the Department of Communications and four years later came under the Department of Information and Broadcasting. 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. The following year, CNO was split up into two divisions, the News Services Division (NSD) and the External Services Division (ESD). In 1956 the name AKASHVANI was adopted for the National Broadcaster. The Vividh Bharati Service was launched in 1957 with popular film music as its main component.

The phenomenal growth achieved by All India Radio has made it one of the largest media organisations in the world. With a network of 262 radio stations, AIR today is 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. 44 Regional News Units originate 469 daily news bulletins in 75 languages. In addition to the daily news bulletins, the News Services Division also mounts number of news-based programmes on topical subjects from Delhi and its Regional News Units.

AIR operates at present 18 FM stereo channels, called AIR FM Rainbow, targeting the urban audience in a refreshing style of presentation. Four more FM channels called, AIR FM Gold, broadcast composite news and entertainment programmes from Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai. With the FM wave sweeping the country, AIR is augmenting its Medium Wave transmission with additional FM transmitters at Regional stations.

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. The technology adopted is the Digital Radio Mondiale or DRM. With the target of complete digitization by 2017, the listeners can look forward to highly enhanced transmission quality in the near future.

Milestones

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. The inception can be traced back to the enforcement of the Telegraph Act on October 1, 1885. Major landmarks of broadcasting are as below:

1920s

June, 1923 : Broadcast of programmes by the Radio Club of Bombay.

November, 1923 : Calcutta Radio Club put out programmes.

July 31, 1924 : Broadcasting Service initiated by the Madras Presidency Radio Club.

July 23, 1927 : Indian Broadcast Company (IBC), Bombay Station inaugurated by Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India.

August 26, 1927 : Calcutta Station of IBC inaugurated.

1930s

March 1, 1930 : IBC went into liquidation.

April 1, 1930 : Indian State Broadcasting Service under Department of Industries and Labour commenced on experimental basis.

March, 1935 : Post of "Controller of Broadcast" instituted.

August 30, 1935 : Lionel Fielden appointed the first controller of Broadcasting in India.

September 10, 1935 : Akashvani Mysore, a private radio station, set up.

January 19, 1936 : First news bulletin broadcast from AIR.

June 8, 1936 : Indian State Broadcasting Service became All India Radio.

August 1, 1937 : Central News Organisation came into existence.

November, 1937 : AIR came under Department of Communication.

October 1, 1939 : External Service started with Pushtu broadcast.

1940s

October 24, 1941 : AIR came under the Department of I&B.

January 1, 1942 : Akashvani Mysore was taken over by Maharaja of Mysore.

February 23, 1946 : AIR came under the Department of Information & Arts.

September 10,1946 : Department of Information and Arts changed to Department of Information and Broadcasting.

1947 (at the time of partition): Six Radio Stations in India (Delhi,Bombay,Calcutta,Madras, Tiruchirapalli and Lucknow) and three Radio Stations in Pakistan (Peshawar, Lahore and Dacca).

September, 1948 : Central News Organisation (CNO) was split up into two Divisions, News Service Division and External Service Division (ESD).

1950s

July 20,1952 : First National Programme of Music broadcast from AIR.

July 29,1953 : National Programme of Talks (English) commenced from AIR.

1954 : First Radio Sangeet Sammelan held.

August 15,1956 : National Programme of Play commenced.

October 3,1957 : Vividh Bharati Services started.

November 1, 1959 : First TV Station in Delhi started as part of AIR.

1960s

November 1,1967 : Commercials on Vividh Bharati introduced.

July 21, 1969 : Yuv-Vani service started from Delhi.

August 15, 1969 : 1000 KW Superpower Medium Wave Transmitter commissioned at Calcutta (Mogra).

1970s

January 8,1971 : 1000 KW Superpower Medium Wave Transmitter commissioned at Rajkot.

1974 : Akashvani Annual Awards instituted.

April 1, 1976 : Doordarshan separated from AIR.

1977 : Introduction of political party broadcasts.

July 23, 1977 : First ever FM Service was inaugurated from Madras.

1980s

May,1983 : AIR Baroda became a CBS station.

September 14,1984 : Two High Power 250 KW shortwave transmitters inaugurated at Aligarh.

October 30,1984 : First Local Station at Nagarcoil started.

January 26,1985 : Commercials on Primary Channel introduced.

August 15,1985 : Introduction of hourly news bulletins.

1985 : All AIR Stations were provided with 5 channel satellite receiver terminals.

May 18,1988 : Introduction of National Channel.

April 8,1989 : Commissioning of Integrated North East Service.

1990s

March 2, 1990 : The 100th Station of AIR commissioned at Warangal (A.P.).

March 10,1990 : Two 500 KW Superpower short wave transmitters Inaugurated at Bangalore.

1990 : AIR introduced Lassa Kaul Award for the best production on the theme of National Integration.

1990 : AIR introduced Award for the best News Correspondent of the year.

October 2,1991 : Vividh Bharti Panaji became a CBS Channel.

October 2, 1992 : Commissioning of FM Channel at Jalandhar.

January 10,1993 : Introduction of Phone-in-programme at AIR Delhi.

January 28,1993 : Commissioning of VB Channel at Varanasi.

April 1, 1993 : The150th Station of AIR inaugurated at Berhampur (Orissa).

August 15,1993 : Introduction of selling of Time Slots on FM Channel to private parties at Delhi - Mumbai.

September 1,1993 : Time Slots on FM Channel to private parties at Chennai.

April 1, 1994 : Sky Radio became operational.

July 25,1994 : Time Slots on FM Channel to private parties at Kolkata.

September 10,1994 : Multi Track Recording Studio commissioned at Mumbai.

September 28,1994 : Four 500 KW Superpower shortwave transmitters at Bangalore,inaugurated making Bangalore one of the biggest transmitting centres in the world.

November 13,1994 : Time Slot s on FM Channel to private parties at Panaji.

January 15,1995 : Radio paging service inaugurated.

August 5,1995 : Multi-track recording studios inaugurated at Chennai.

1995 : AIR introduced Akashvani Awards for best Audience Research Survey Report.

February 1,1996 : Foundation stone laid for new Broadcasting House in Delhi.

May 2,1996 : Launching of AIR on-line Information Service on Internet.

January 13,1997 : Audio in real time on Internet Service started.

November 23,1997 : Prasar Bharati Corporation came into existence.

January 26,1998 : Radio on Demand' Service on 2nd FM Channel.

February 25,1998 : AIR news on telephone, live on internet.

April,1998 : Sale of Time Slots on FM stopped.

August 29,1998 : Prasar Bharati Bill was passed by Lok Sabha on 31.7.1998 made operational through an ordinance.

June,1999 : Shri R.R.Shah, IAS, named officiating Member Executive. Private FM Channels announced by GOI.

August 15,1999 : Radio Station commissioned at Kokrajhar in Bodo Land Autonomous Council Areas.

August 15,1999 : Second FM Channels commissioned at Delhi and Calcutta.

November, 1999 : AIR launched a daily Malayalam Service for the Gulf Region. It consists of a 10 mts. News Bulletins at 2315 hrs. followed by a 5 mts. Commentary on a topical issue.

2000-2007

February 11, 2000 : Introduction of VB Channel at AIR Jabalpur.

March 13, 2000 : Radio Station commissioned at Dhubri in Bodo Land Autonomous Council Area.

March 24, 2000 : Introduction of VB Channel at AIR, Jammu.

June, 2000 : Community Radio Stations commissioned at Nongstoin & William Nagar in (Meghalaya), Saiha (Mizoram), Tuensang and Mon in Nagaland.

July 17,2000 : Regional Staff Training Institute (Tech.) started functioning at Bhubaneswar (Orissa)

August 15,2000 : Introduction of VB Channel at AIR, Coimbatore.

September 3, 2000 : Introduction of VB Channel at AIR,Jamshedpur.

February 7,2001 : Radio Station commissioned at Gopeshwar (Chamoli) in the newly created State of Uttaranchal.

September 1, 2001 : AIR launched Infotainment channels, FM-II, at the four metro's.,Chennai,Delhi.,Kolkata Mumbai.

November 12, 2001 : This day declared as The Public Service Broadcasting day to commemorate Gandhji's visit to AIR. Museum of Radio and Doordarshan inaugurated.

February 27, 2002 : AIR launched its first ever digital satellite home service to cater to the Indian sub-continent and South East Asia.

July 2002 : 75 years of Broadcasting celebrated.

April 2003 : Marketing Division of Prasar Bharati inaugurated.

January 26th, 2004 : Bhasha Bharati channel of AIR launched at Delhi.

January 26th, 2004 : Classical Music channel launched at Bangalore.

February 19, 2004 : Shri Brijeshwar Singh, IAS took over as DG:AIR.

March 29th, 2004 : National Artists Awards ceremony held at Hyderabad.

April 1st, 2004 : Launch of Kisan Vani Programme from 12 stations.

May 25, 2004 : 20KW MW transmission at Kupwara Commissioned to strengthen Radio coverage in the border area of J&K.

September 6, 2004 : Min. of Information & Broadcasting laid foundation stone for 10 KW FM transmitter at Vijayawada.

December 16,2004 : Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh inaugurated DTH Service of AIR & Doordarshan.

:12 AIR channels in different regional languages from various state capitals made available countrywide through the KU Band on DTH platform of Prasar Bharati.

15th June,2005 : FM transmitter commissioned at Port Blair, Himmatnager, Saraipalli, Mandla, Rajgarh, Agartala and Imphal.

9th July,2005 : 1 kW FM transmitter commissioned at Shimla.

15th Aug, 2005 : FM transmitter commissioned at Udaipur, Rohtak, Gulbarga, Aurangabad and Madurai.

23rd Aug, 2005 : New Broadcasting House equipped with digital studio setup for News Service Division, External Service and Home Service inaugurated by Hon'ble Minister of I&B and Culture.

2nd Sept, 2005 : 1 kW FM transmitter commissioned at Gorakhpur.

23rd Decmeber,2005 : 1 kW FM transmitter commissioned at Deogarh in Orissa.

25th December,2005 : 5 kW FM transmitter commissioned at both Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh and Kurseong in West Bengal.

27th December,2005 : 10 kW FM transmitter commissioned at Shillong in Meghalaya and 1kW transmitter commissioned at Darjeeling in West Bengal.

15th & 16th Feb-06 : Commonwealth Broadcasting Association conference held at Delhi.

17th June, 2006 : 1 KW FM transmitter commissioned at Vijayawada (AP).

30th June, 2006 : Uplinking of DTH channel increased from 12 to 20.

11th July, 2006 : 1KW FM transmitter commissioned at Kanpur (UP).

1st Sept, 2006 : 200 KW MW transmitter commissioned at Kargil (J&K).1KW MW transmitters commissioned at Drass & Tiesuru (J&K).

2nd October, 2006 : 20 KW MW transmitter commissioned at Kota (Raj.)

Jan-2007 to Dec-2007

1. New Stations with FM Transmitters commissioned at Tamilnadu),Dharampur(Macherla(AndhraPradesh) and Aurangabad (Bihar).
2. FM Transmitters commissioned at existing stations at Itanagar (ArunachalPradesh),
3. Aizawl (Mizoram), Kohima (Nagaland), Baripada (Orissa), Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh) and Puducherry.
4. Existing FM Transmitters at Chennai i.e. 5 KW FM Tr. of FM Gold and 10 KW FM Tr. of FM Rainbow replaced by 20 KW FM Transmitters.
5. Existing 5 KW FM Tr. of FM Gold service at Kolkata replaced by 20 KW FM Transmitter.
6. New station with 1 KW MW Transmitter commissioned at Soro (Orissa).

7. Existing 100 KW MW Transmitters at Delhi & Raipur (Chhatisgarh) replaced with new state-of-the-art technology transmitters.
8. As part of J&K special package for boosting border coverage, new Stations with 1 KW MW Transmitters at Nyoma & Diskit in Leh region commissioned.

Jan-2008 to Dec-2008

1. FM Transmitter at Leh (J&K) commissioned.
2. A 200 KW MW Transmitter commissioned replacing 100 KW MW Transmitter at Najibabad.
3. As part of J&K special package for boosting border coverage, a new station with 1KW MW Transmitter commissioned at Padum in Kargil. With this all the 12 projects included in J&K special package Phase-1 commissioned.
4. Digital Captive Earth Stations at Leh, Varanasi, Rohtak and Aurangabad commissioned. New uplink stations at Dehradun and Silchar under implementation.
5. A new DTH Channel, Radio Kashmir, Srinagar added in the Direct to Home Service of AIR. There are now 21 radio channels available countrywide through the KU Band DTH Platform of Prasar Bharati (DD +), benefitting the listeners all over India.

Jan-2009 to Dec-2009

1. New station with 5 KW FM Transmitter commissioned at Oras (Sindhudurganagry) in Maharashtra.
2. Computerization of AIR stations and offices in progress to facilitate online exchange of information and improvement of efficiency.
3. Permanent studio facilities equipped with Digital equipment and computerized Hard Disc Work Stations for recording, dubbing, editing & playback provided at Jaipur (Raj) & Tawang (Arunachal Pradesh).

Jan-2010 to Dec-2010

1. An exclusive dedicated FM channel "AIR FM DILLI" with one KW transmitter installed at AIR Broadcasting House Delhi. This channel was available on 100.1 MHz in National Capital Region.
2. The following new transmitters were installed:
 - i. Churachandpur (Manipur)-6 KW FM Tr., Studio & S/Qrs.
 - ii. Bharmour (Himachal Pradesh)- 100 W FM Tr.,
 - iii. Keylong (Himachal Pradesh)- 100 W FM Tr.,
 - iv. Ooty (Tamilnadu)- 100 W FM Tr.,
 - v. Thanjavur (Tamilnadu)- 100 W FM Tr.
3. AIR 'News on Phone' Service made available at 14 places i.e. Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Patna, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Bangalore, Thiruvananthapuram, Imphal, Lucknow, Raipur, Guwahati, and Shimla.

Jan-2011 to Dec-2011

1. Coverage of World Cup Cricket.
2. FM Gold started 24 Hours Service from 2nd October, 2011.

2012

1. Bangladesh recognizes Akashvani for its contribution in Bangladesh Liberation War on 27th March, 2012 at Dhaka. Sh. L. D. Mandloi, DG, AIR received the award at a special ceremony in Dhaka.

Reference: Website of Prasar Bharti.