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How well do you know All India Radio?

Radio

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RnMTeam | 08 Jun 2016 17:46

AIR

International Radio

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MUMBAI: Prasar Bharati CEO Jawahar Sircar's poignant piece on the evolution of All India Radio on the occasion of its 80th birthday finally put paid to speculation about the origin of its better known monicker Akashwani.

The name we now know, does not have any Bangla origins but was the name of the AIR station in Mysore before it was adopted nationally by the broadcaster in 1936.

AIR has been with us for 80 years, refusing to loosen its maternal hold over listeners despite the aggressive entry of the brash young breed of private FM operators. Yet, there are aspects of the government run broadcaster that are often overlooked, sometimes sidelined. Here are a few new and old trivia about AIR worth pondering over.

* The Persian service of All India Radio's External Services Division (ESD) launched a multimedia website and mobile app to coincide with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Iran in May this year. AIR also started a WhatsApp-based listeners' response forum for its Persian service where listeners from Iran can directly interact.

AIR has been broadcasting to Iran in the Persian language since 1941 and it is one of the oldest services in which external broadcast is done.

* Saeed Jaffrey, the veteran actor who died in London on 15 November 2015, started as an announcer on All India Radio in 1951 on a salary of Rs 250 per month before bagging the role of a pitch man in Swedish-American director Rolf Forsberg's short film, 'Stalked' in 1968. The actor was praised for his performance and never looked back.

* India is set to restart the special Bangla radio service for Bangladeshi audience after a gap of six years with more programmes including Rabindra Sangeet and Nazrul Geeti, besides news bulletins that would ensure 'India's perspective on international issues' reaches the neighbouring country. All India Radio's special Bangla service, which beamed Indian news bulletins in Bangladesh during its liberation war in 1971, was discontinued by the UPA government in 2010.

* Narendra Modi's 'Mann Ki Baat' address to the nation on All India Radio in May this year coincided with the completion of two years of his government which assumed office on 20 May 2014. The unique broadcast is carried by the entire network of AIR including all stations, all AIR FM channels (FM Gold and FM Rainbow), local radio stations, Vividh Bharati Stations and five community radio stations. It is also broadcast by the Urdu and Hindi Services of the External Services of All India Radio for listeners in the Indian sub-continent and the Indian Diaspora spread across the globe.

*The regional versions of the 'Mann Ki Baat' are played at capital AIR stations in non-Hindi speaking zones at 8.00 pm hours on the same day. The regional versions are relayed by all AIR stations including local radio stations in the respective states. The English version of Mann Ki Baat is also broadcast by AIR Delhi at 8.00 pm the same day and also broadcast by the General Overseas Service. It is live streamed for global audience and is accessible through mobile app, allindiaradio.gov.in, apart from the narendramodi.in/mankibaat, mygov.in, and the Narendra Modi app.

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