

Lahore

# Echoes of decades gone by

By Amjad Mahmood

WITH the donation of a five kilowatt transmitter by Marconi company, the Lahore Radio was established at YMCA hostel on Dec 16, 1937. Lahore used to be a very quiet place during those days, and the radio had a fairly wide coverage area though its transmitter was not all that powerful.

Later, the radio station was shifted to the once residence of Sir Fazl-i-Husain located on the road leading from Simla Pahari to the Governor's House. Not many people know that the Independence Declaration read out by Mustafa Ali Hamdani on the night between August 13 and 14 was aired from the same place. G.K. Mehra was the station director then.

The mansion spreading over a couple of kanals was sufficient to meet the requirements of broadcasting for the next two decades. Then the government felt the need for expanding its area of coverage and introduced programmes for countering propaganda aired by Jalandhar Radio (India). So a new capacious site was selected on Empress Road (where now the radio station building stands) and a fairly large structure was constructed there. A new powerful transmitter of 100 kilowatt was installed which could cover a radius of

over 250km.

At Sir Fazl-i-Husain's bungalow, there were just two studios. The transmissions were live and the daily broadcast time totalled around 14 hours. Among the regular performers were great musicians like Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Umeed Ali Khan, Barkat Ali Khan, Roshan Ara Begum and Bhai Lal.

Now no trace of the old radio station building can be found for want of an effort and a will to preserve the broadcasting her-

itage. It is now alive only in the memory of senior artistes, writers, playwrights, musicians and producers.

The first mission assigned to the Pakistan Broadcasting Service, formed immediately after the creation of Pakistan, was to reunite all those who had

been separated from each other during migration. Soon the institution became a part of the literary, cultural and social life of Lahore. Name any known playwright, intellectual, drama

artiste, musician or singer, they were associated with the radio at some point in time.

After Pak Tea House, Lahore radio station's canteen was the second most preferred hangout for intellectuals, poets and writers of the city who would gather here in the evening daily. Many would come here to meet Nasir Kazmi, Sufi Ghulam Mustafa Tabassum, A Hameed, etc. It also became kind of an office where known singers, musicians and poets would be hired for concerts and for work in films and later on television. For everyone knew that they were at the radio station in the evenings or at least their contact numbers were available with the radio station staff. The annual two-day spring concert was the high point, with the first evening devoted to 'light' music and the second to classical music.

The shifting from Fazl-i-Husain's rented house to the new awe-inspiring Empress Road building took place just before the 1965 war, in which the Lahore Radio was to play a huge role on the propaganda front. Dozens of motivational songs were recorded here on a war footing. All motivational songs by melody queen Noor Jehan during the war were recorded here. Muhammad Azam Khan, the

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AMRITA Preetam at Lahore radio. — File photo

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# Force that questions all but answers none

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departmental action against an official based on the findings of the inquiry or registration of a criminal case, and request the chief justices of high courts in serious cases to appoint district and sessions judges for a judicial inquiry.

Officials said the police as a representative of the state were responsible for law enforcement and establishment of the writ of the government, but tend to use discretion during such duties.

The discretion led to misuse of power like highhandedness, torture, implication and unlawful custody, they said, adding society therefore needed some watchdogs to control these discretions.

They said the Police Order 2002 was made after consultative process and an attempt towards democratisation of the police functions.

It now required implementation in letter and spirit because it had been amended in 2004, 2005 and 2006 according to the wishes of the provincial governments.

They said if the reforms in the shape of the Police Order were not implemented, the police would keep using their discretion, continue to be used for political purposes, and not improve their image.

And the financial aid of \$350 million given by the Asian Development Bank under the Access to Justice Programme would go down the drain as its major chunk was being spent on the force, they said.

## Cash, valuables taken away

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE, June 24: Thieves

## Prayer timings

Fajr	03:19
Zuhr	12:05
Asr	05:01
Maghreb	07:10
Isha	08:48

Starting time in Lahore

## Echoes of decades gone by

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producer of those songs, recalls it as a unique period. "One song would be written, composed, recorded and broadcast daily," he tells Dawn.

Nizam Din's propaganda fight against Akash Wani also became a popular broadcast while Ijaz Batalvi's border talk featured eyewitness account from the battlefield.

In September 1976, the authorities took a commendable decision of establishing a Yadbagh (memory garden) where all known artistes, writers, poets and intellectuals who have been associated with the broadcast in one way or the other were asked to plant a sapling.

At present, there are eight studios and four channels — three AM and one FM — located on the premises transmitting round the clock. The sound system has been digitalised and the number of regular staff, not more than two dozen back in 1947, now exceeds well over 250. It houses precious archives of speeches of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan, Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar, Husain Shaheed Suhrawardi, Josh Maleehabadi and Faiz Ahmad Faiz among others, though many of the works were destroyed during shifting. Songs spread over tens of thousands of minutes are also lying in the record rooms of the radio station.