



LS SPECIAL

Days of the radio

'Nostalgia' is probably the first word we associate with 'radio'. A 5-minute break from the hassles of Friday traffic, a request show and a song for your lover, or that catchy jingle simply refusing to erase itself from memory – these are what make radio, RADIO!

So tune in and stay tuned...the transmission begins now...

THE PAST...

The late 1930s was a troubled time for humanity. With war looming, Hitler and his Nazi rhetoric had traumatised the conscience of the world even before the news of genocide and ethnical cleansing of millions of Jews came into the forefront.

The second World War seemed inevitable and the conflict had already begun on various fronts. The geopolitical importance of the Indian Subcontinent was soon realised at all quarters and to counter the Axis propaganda different broadcasting stations were set up across India.

External Services were introduced at stations in the wake of German propaganda directed towards Afghanistan, Iran and the Arab nations, areas that were also deemed strategically important.

In the eastern side of the subcontinent, the 'Dhaka Dhvani Bistar Kendra' (Dhaka Audio Broadcasting Station) had operational



beginnings on 16 December, 1939. Established in a rented house at Nazimuddin Road, (now Sheikh Borhanuddin College) the station was rather ill-equipped with the range of transmission being a meagre 20-25 miles by night and 30-45 miles by day.

The Japanese occupation of Burma in 1942 was a constant threat to India, and East Bengal soon witnessed an influx of allied military personnel. The radio station – 'Air Dhaka' as it was later renamed – even with

the short air time, 5p.m. to 10p.m., seemed a refreshing addition to the lives of the soldiers that were stationed in the eastern side and also for the civilians, distressed at the uncertainties that they had to confront.

After the end of hostilities of WWII, the station remained. In the days of pre-partition, performers from Calcutta (now Kolkata) would regularly feature in shows that were telecast in Dhaka. Many creative minds came and performed with great

enthusiasm.

Kazi Nazrul Islam, the rebel poet, had composed a musical programme 'Purbani' for transmission, which was widely recognised as one of his seminal works. Other significant show aired was a live drama, Sarat Chandra's immortal classic, Devdas, which featured the acclaimed actors Promothesh Barua and Jamuna Devi.

Post-partition, radio once again became an essential tool for cultural propaganda. In an attempt to 'unify' the customs of both wings of Pakistan, Governor-General Mohammed Ali Jinnah before leaving Dhaka on his maiden visit, delivered a speech on radio reasserting his 'Urdu-only' policy.

Like all the speeches made in his historic visit, this radio broadcast instilled a further urge for cultural freedom amongst the Bengalis, which eventually amalgamated into the Language Movement of 1952.

Between 1947 and 1971, Bengalis as citizens of Pakistan, faced cultural domination in more ways than one. Religious bias was rampant and freedom of speech curtailed.

In the mid-sixties, songs and poems of Tagore were banned, a step which received vehement protest in East Pakistan. Every time the powers that be presented with so-called ideologies of 'blending in', Bengalis preferred the notion of 'standing out!'