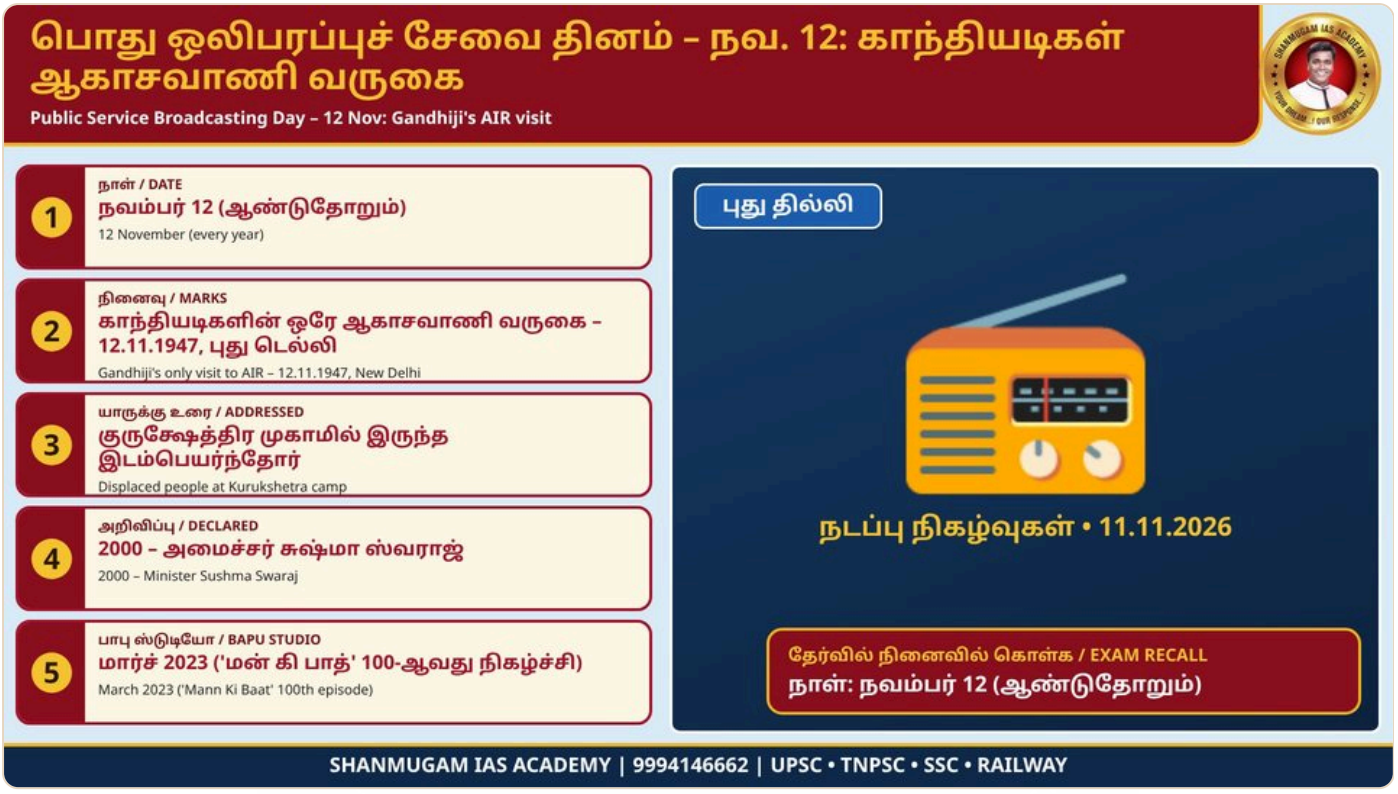
Public Service Broadcasting Day – 12 Nov: Gandhiji's AIR visit

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News

12 November is observed every year as Public Service Broadcasting Day. On 12 November 1947 Mahatma Gandhi made his first and only visit to Broadcasting House, New Delhi. It was Deepavali; unable to visit the people displaced from Pakistan who were staying at the Kurukshetra camp, he addressed them by radio; Rajkumari Amrit Kaur accompanied him. Reluctant to speak on radio, he agreed on the advice of G.D. Birla; the studio was arranged like his daily prayer meetings. In 2000 the then Information and Broadcasting Minister Sushma Swaraj announced that the day would be observed as Public Service Broadcasting Day. In March 2023, marking the 100th episode of 'Mann Ki Baat', the studio was dedicated as the 'Bapu Studio'. Akashvani completed 90 years on 8 June 2026; its 591 stations reach 98% of the population.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Date	12 November (every year)
Marks	Gandhiji's only visit to AIR – 12.11.1947, New Delhi
Addressed	Displaced people at Kurukshetra camp
Declared	2000 – Minister Sushma Swaraj
Bapu Studio	March 2023 ('Mann Ki Baat' 100th episode)

Point	Details
AIR name	8 June 1936; 'Akashvani' – 1956
Motto	Bahujana Hitaya, Bahujana Sukhaya
Scale (2026)	591 stations; 98% of people; 23 languages, 146 dialects

Background

- History: regular broadcasting began from the Bombay station of the Indian Broadcasting Company on 23 July 1927 – now National Broadcasting Day. The government-run Indian State Broadcasting Service became All India Radio (AIR) on 8 June 1936; the name 'Akashvani' was adopted in 1956 and Vividh Bharati began in 1957.
- Freedom struggle: during the 1942 Quit India Movement Usha Mehta ran the secret 'Congress Radio' in Bombay, broadcasting banned news, until she was arrested.
- Constitution: in Secretary, Ministry of I&B v. Cricket Association of Bengal (1995) the Supreme Court held that airwaves are public property to be regulated in the public interest, and that broadcasting is part of free speech under Article 19(1)(a). Prasar Bharati is the statutory autonomous body that runs Akashvani and Doordarshan.
- Public service broadcasting aims at public welfare through education, information and entertainment rather than commercial profit. Akashvani's motto is 'Bahujana Hitaya, Bahujana Sukhaya' (for the welfare and happiness of the many).

Tamil Nadu link: Tamil Nadu: (1) In 1924 electrical engineer C.V. Krishnaswamy set up the Madras Presidency Radio Club and began broadcasting from Holloway's Gardens, Egmore – one of India's earliest radio efforts. (2) In 1929 the Corporation of Madras ran a municipal broadcasting service from Ripon Building. (3) AIR's Madras station opened in 1938 – inaugurated by Governor Lord Erskine, with the inaugural speech by then Premier C. Rajagopalachari (DT Next).

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

12 November is observed every year as Public Service Broadcasting Day. On 12 November 1947 Mahatma Gandhi made his first and only visit to Broadcasting House, New Delhi. It was Deepavali; unable to visit the people displaced from Pakistan who were staying at the Kurukshetra camp, he addressed them by radio; Rajkumari Amrit Kaur accompanied him. Reluctant to speak on radio, he agreed on the advice of G.D. Birla; the studio was arranged like his daily prayer meetings.

What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Date: 12 November (every year); Marks: Gandhiji's only visit to AIR – 12.11.1947, New Delhi; Addressed: Displaced people at Kurukshetra camp; Declared: 2000 – Minister Sushma Swaraj.

What is the background to this news?

History: regular broadcasting began from the Bombay station of the Indian Broadcasting Company on 23 July 1927 – now National Broadcasting Day. The government-run Indian State Broadcasting Service became All India Radio (AIR) on 8 June 1936; the name 'Akashvani' was adopted in 1956 and Vividh Bharati began in 1957.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. On 12 Nov 1947, Gandhiji spoke on AIR to displaced people staying in a camp at which place?

A) Panipat

B) Ambala

C) Amritsar

D) Kurukshetra

Answer: D – Explanation: Kurukshetra – on Deepavali, his only visit to Broadcasting House. In 2000 the day was named Public Service Broadcasting Day.

2. What is the motto of Akashvani (All India Radio)?

A) Bahujana Hitaya Bahujana Sukhaya

B) Satyameva Jayate

C) Yogakshemam Vahamyaham

D) Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

Answer: A – Explanation: 'Bahujana Hitaya, Bahujana Sukhaya' – for the welfare and happiness of the many. Satyameva Jayate is the national motto; Yogakshemam is LIC's.

3. In which 1995 case did the Supreme Court hold that 'airwaves are public property'?

A) Kesavananda Bharati

B) Cricket Assn. of Bengal

C) Maneka Gandhi

D) Romesh Thappar

Answer: B – Explanation: Secretary, Ministry of I&B v. Cricket Association of Bengal – it also held broadcasting to be part of Article 19(1)(a).

4. Who ran the secret 'Congress Radio' in Bombay during the 1942 Quit India Movement?

A) Aruna Asaf Ali

B) Sucheta Kripalani

C) Usha Mehta

D) Kasturba Gandhi

Answer: C – Explanation: Usha Mehta – she aired banned news and leaders' speeches until arrested. Aruna Asaf Ali hoisted the flag at Gowalia Tank.

5. When AIR's Madras station opened in 1938, which then Premier of Madras Presidency gave the inaugural speech?

A) K. Kamaraj

B) C. Rajagopalachari

C) S. Satyamurti

D) P.T. Rajan

Answer: B – Explanation: Rajaji (Premier 1937–39); Governor Lord Erskine opened it. In 1924 C.V. Krishnaswamy had set up the Madras Presidency Radio Club.

Sources: News On AIR (12 Nov 2025); News On AIR (Akashvani 90, 8 Jun 2026); News On AIR (National Broadcasting Day); PIB (2002); MIB; The Tribune; DT Next (2019). © Shanmugam IAS Academy.