KUALA LUMPUR: "Sedekad mendidik dan menghibur jiwa." (A decade educating and entertaining the soul)

The tagline is a familiar one for the loyal listeners of the radio station that has been on air for over 10 years.

In fact, educating and entertaining seems to be the winning formula for the radio station sponsored by think tank Ikim (the Institute for Islamic Understanding). Its station, IKIMfm, was launched on 6 July, 2001.

"IKIMfm is the only radio station in Malaysia broadcasting Islamic da’wah (call towards Islam) on a station that operates 24 hours a day," said IKIMfm Director, Nik Roskiman Abdul Samad.

"To date, we have about 50 entertainment programmes catering to listeners across the age spectrum," he told Bernama during an interview at his office in Langgak Tunku, here, recently.

IKIMfm broadcasts nationwide, but several of its programmes can also be downloaded via its website www.ikimfm.my for the benefit of listeners who are not able to tune into the programmes while it was airing live.

Those with iPads or iPhones are also able to download the IKIMfm application and tune in to the station live through their smart gadgets.

Also, those on the Blackberry or android platforms can tune in to IKIMfm live by going to http://mobile.ikimfm.my.

Nik Roskiman said the station can be heard in over 100 countries through its website.

It is an achievement that won the station the 2011 National Islamic Innovation Carnival Award.

The progress achieved by IKIMfm over the past 10 years clearly shows it to be on par with commercial radio stations, although it provides a different offering.

The second wave of research in 2011 by The Nielsen Company (Malaysia) showed that IKIMfm ranked 11th of the 34 radio stations surveyed in Malaysia.

Nielsen, the marketing and advertising research company, listed IKIMfm holding the seventh spot among Malay language radio stations.

It estimated the listeners of the radio station to be around 811,000.

However, the survey only covers Peninsular Malaysia. "If we factor in listeners in Sabah and Sarawak and the neighbouring countries, the numbers may reach well over a million," said Nik Roskiman, who had been IKIMfm’s director since 5 April, 2009.

Since IKIMfm first went on air 10 years ago, it has strongly held on to the themes of educating, entertaining and informing when formulating its programmes.

Nik Roskiman said any deviation might only be from its presentation and arrangements.

He said what was evident was that in educating the masses, IKIMfm cannot resemble an educational radio station that is only suitable for schoolchildren.

"To educate the masses, teenagers and adults, we need different approaches. It calls for the ‘adult learning’ approach.

"Our biggest challenge is figuring out ways to present a heavy issue in a manner that is entertaining, casual and interesting.

He noted that 75 per cent of IKIMfm’s programmes were educational, 20 per cent were entertainment and another five per cent were informative.

Nearly 90 per cent of the programmes on IKIMfm are interactive, to allow listeners to share their views, offer comments and ask questions, as well as to make these programmes more entertaining.

"For those needing counseling, the station may provide a good avenue to seek solutions," said Nik Roskiman.

Not only can IKIMfm listeners call in, they can also send SMSes, post their views on the station’s Facebook page, and share comments via Twitter, e-mail or Skype.

Besides interacting live with programme hosts or guests, they can also post feedback on the programmes.

"The feedback we receive is that our loyal listeners see IKIMfm as a knowledge portal.

"Those who love knowledge and tuning in for the first time would find it hard to switch to other stations," he said.

The programmes on IKIMfm target several age groups. The programmes ‘Alam Ria Si Kecil’ (The Fun World of the Little Ones), which airs every Saturday (2.00 - 4.00 pm), and the Arabic language programme ‘Dunia al-Atlaf’ (the World of Children), on air every Sunday at 2.00 pm, are for children.

Nik Roskiman said such programmes were designed to attract children to listen to IKIMfm from a young age.

IKIMfm also puts some thought into the time a programme is aired.

A programme for students and teenagers is slotted after 10.00 pm, when they have finished with classes and homework.

Radio deejays or programme hosts are also carefully selected.

For example, the young and glib DJ Faiz hosts programmes for teenagers.

"The programme for teens, which airs every Tuesday at 10.00 pm, would see us inviting teenagers to the studio to share their views and opinions. We also open the lines to get the comments of listeners and we invite motivation experts over," he added.

For 2012, IKIMfm introduced a new slot called ‘Suara Siswa’ (the Voice of Undergraduates), targeted for students of institutions of higher learning.

The programme airs every Wednesday from 10.00 pm to 11.00 pm. IKIMfm’s segment for women covers a variety of programmes.

According to Nik Roskiman, the programmes begin at 10.00 am.
Besides ‘Islam Itu Indah’ (Islam is Beautiful) with Prof Dr Muhaya Mohamad every Wednesday morning at 10.00 am, IKIMfm also airs another ‘Usrati’ (family) programme.

The 45-minute programme features Ustazah Norhafizah Musa, a lecturer at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and discusses steps to building happy families based on the teachings of the Al-Quran and Sunnah.

Also, loyal IKIMfm listeners would be familiar with programmes such as ‘Mukmin Professional’, ‘Mahligai Kasih’, ‘Bicara Muamalat’, ‘Islam Agamaku’ and ‘Ad-Daurah’ which airs at 5.00 pm Mondays through Fridays respectively.

Nik Roskiman said these programmes were targeted towards those driving home from work.

‘Mukmin Professional’, where the speaker is Ustaz Pahrol Mohd Juoi, focuses on acts of worship and the purpose of life.

‘Mahligai Kasih’, a programme which initially began with discussions on building a happy marriage, has continued this year with a focus on the Malaysian Sharia Legal Department’s Family Support Division.

Speaking during the programme is the Division Director himself, Dr Mohd Na’im Mokhtar, who once held the position of Sharia court judge.

Among the most popular programmes on IKIMfm is ‘Tafsir Al-Quran’ with Ustaz Dr Zahazan Mohamed, which airs from Monday through Friday at 6.30 am and is repeated at 8.00 pm.

Another highly popular segment on the station is ‘Islam itu Indah’, a motivational programme by Prof Dr Muhaya Mohamad, which airs on Wednesdays at 10.15 am.

Those who want to learn more about Islamic financial issues, such as ‘riba’ (usury), can tune in to ‘Bicara Muamalat’ with Dr Zaharuddin Abd Rahman, a senior lecturer at Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIAM).

Another favourite with listeners is the programme ‘Islam Agamaku’. It features the experiences of those who have embraced Islam.

“The new Muslims reveal what first attracted them to Islam and the difficulties they had to endure, including objections from family members.

“Some were disowned by their families. Sometimes we can’t help but be moved to tears while listening to the hardships they’ve endured,” said Nik Roskiman.

There is also a special segment for senior citizens through IKIMfm’s programmes ‘Pondok Warisan’, which discusses the 40 Hadiths, ‘Fiqhus Sirah’ (The Seerah of the Prophet SAW) and ‘Al Furqan’, a study of the Arabic language.

Improving IKIMfm is an ongoing effort.

According to Nik Roskiman, among the ways of improving the station is by monitoring international radio stations, such as the British Broadcasting Corporation in the United Kingdom, National Public Radio in the United States, and several other stations in which the majority of the programmes are academic.

He said what was most important was for IKIMfm to remain updated and relevant.

However, he said some quarters tended to view anything related to Islam as negative, backwards and orthodox. “In terms of employing the latest technology, I’d like IKIMfm to be on par with entertainment-themed radio stations, if not more popular.” - Bernama