Ham RADIO News

Newsletter of the Amateur Radio Society of India (Indian Affiliate of IARU)
Supplement to July 2016 Issue

From the Editor’s desk:

There were a few articles of interest that were not included in the July 2016 issue of HAM RADIO NEWS; I thought it'd be a good idea to publish a *supplement* now instead of keeping them waiting till October, Hi

This is the first time a *supplement* to HRN is being published!

73, de VU2TS - Editor

AT1HQ
IARU HF Championship 2016
A report

A summary of last weekend's IARU HF Contest is presented below. Thanks to Prasad VU2PTT for the network infrastructure.

Call: AT1HQ
Operators: VU2CPL VU2CDP VU2MUD VU2NKS VU2PTT VU2RCT VU2SWS VU2WE
Station: AT1HQ

Class: Headquarters HP
QTH: Multiple
Operating Time (hrs): 24

Summary:

Band	CW Qs	Ph Qs	Zones	HQ Mults
160:	-	-	-	-
80:	12	-	2	8
40:	272	41	23	30
20:	401	343	32	42
15:	233	644	27	41
10:	123	110	12	24
Total:	1041	1138	96	145

Total Score = 2,132,127

Club: VU Contest Group

Comments:

We knew from the beginning that this was going to be a hard grind when we had many spotless days leading up to the contest. IARU is not a rate contest except for brief periods when we have a solid opening to a major population area which is usually EU for us here in the subcontinent. The fact that it is monsoon here with heavy rains means only the hardiest souls willingly volunteer to operate HQ.

This year we had a team of 8 ops across 3 cities who were networked via a cloud server that made operating fun. Propagation varied vastly with VU2RCT enjoying some great openings compared to the rest who were further inland in Bangalore or up along the coast in Mumbai.

Chandra VU2RCT

10m was dead all of Saturday and only came to life in the last hour of the contest on Sunday where we managed to squeeze out a few hundred QSOs. 15m was flat by Sunday afternoon despite showing promise on the previous evening. 20m was noisy all the time and proved to be a test of patience and hearing. Fairly strong opening on 40m and the gray line yielded some good mults. But we still lack a good 40m phone station and hope to fill that void by next year. When it all ended it was clear the we lost about 700 QSOs on 15m and 10m due to conditions. Hopefully we will have stronger low band performance next year.

Deepak VU2CDP

N1MM+ WAN NETWORK OVER VPN: This year we decided to network the stations spread across India on a WAN using VPN links. The plan was to have central copy of N1MM+ as the Master log on the cloud and with a VPN server for remote stations to connect. Hamachi VPN was considered as an option but we need to buy a license for more than 5 users - we had 9 computers. We then tried setting up an Amazon AWS Windows Server running a N1MM+ master copy for the other stations to connect over VPN. but quickly found we would need to set up a second server as the VPN gateway machine. After doing a quick check with Brian N9ADG who had written about a similar setup for CQWW-SSB-2012 –

http://lists.contesting.com/_3830/2012-10/msg02855.html

where he had mentioned this too, we got one golden nugget - that they had used the Softether VPN server in that effort. This idea was parked for future reference.

We then went to Microsoft Azure cloud and tried the VPN gateway provided as a service there - the remote VPN clients were connecting but the N1MM+ network was not making connections although the machines could be seen in the network status window as trying to connect. Softether VPN suggested by Brian helped at this point - we tried this on this Azure cloud based instance of Windows 2012 server and it worked perfectly after a bit of tweaking. VPN Setup was also far easier than trying to configure AWS or Azure VPN gateways. Brian N9ADG also helped with some of the testing to ensure stability of the network. Maybe some more tweaking would have got the WAN network going but in the interest of time we decided to go with a hard coded network.

Manoj VU2CPL

The experience that we had with N1MM+ was that the built in network self-discovery of stations was not working well on VPN - this works quite ok on local networks which we used during our VU4KV expedition. To fix the issue with network self-discovery over VPN, we decided to go with fixed IP addresses over VPN and added the computer names and VPN IP addresses to the Network section of N1MM+. This worked seamlessly - the VPN network only carried the N1MM+ traffic - all other network adapters and internet connectivity of the client machines worked as usual. The setup ensured that the client machines easily logged back on the N1MM network whenever they were stopped for some reason and started again.

Madhu VU2MUD

We have written up a user manual for setting up the network and configuring N1MM+ for the contest for the client side. This Operators setup manual is complete and was used by the team members who are all non-IT folks! The server side setup was not documented completely in the rush to get everything going but we are working on finishing this quickly and share it publicly so others can use this as an option in future. There is not much reference material available in the public domain on how to setup this kind of network we use for IARU HQ stations, hopefully by sharing this detailed step by step manual it will not be a mystery anymore and others can improve on it. The whole team really enjoyed the real-time network connectivity and messaging feature of N1MM+ Logger and will be back next year with a hopefully bigger performance, conditions permitting.

Thanks for the contacts, every single QSO is appreciated. Logs will go to LoTW shortly and paper QSL via VU2PTT.

73,
The AT1HQ Team

ACTIVATION OF IOTA – AS173

Rameswaram (Pamban) Island
May 6th to 9th 2016

All things considered DXers and contesters usually develop natural urge to be in pileups. Once tasted, the thrill that runs cannot be easily removed from the memory. Right around the time of national field day announcement by ARSI in March, I was in search of buddies with whom to go for field day. Phone calls to few friends did not result in any positive signs. Summer holidays for kids and XYL on vacation is the ideal time for such activity for sure!

It is right around that time, Sangeeth VU2WH, called to my surprise from A45 land asking for my willingness to do a field activation! I had previous acquaintance with Sangeeth from VU4KV and that call fuelled my interest level again. But then he wanted a location that can provide DX pileups. What can be better fed to the ham craving for such a thrill?! Quickly couple of Island names came up to our attention. Any DX islands eliminated because of timeframe required for planning and budget. Rameswaram seemed to be most appropriate location of choice. Rameswaram scored moderately high on rarity scale with only 16.4% of IOTA chasers having it confirmed. Lot of pileup opportunity for us here with right operating practices. Sangeeth mentioned to me that we will have Manoj VU2CPL joining as prime SSB operator. Knowing each other from contest participation and DX chases helps a lot in forming such teams quickly. With competent team formation, the confidence gets boosted naturally.

Rameswaram is our destination!

With some calls to VU3DNG Gnana, who is local at Ramanathapuram, Rameswaram seemed to be more than just a probability. Thanks to all help extended by Gnana, we could get accommodation scouted and fixed. By this time, we realized that we are running short on time to activate the Island for during field day. We then proceeded with paper works required for WPC and apply for temporary QTH change with a group call. We learned that with precise paper work and followups temporary QTH licensing is relatively easier. Or probably that is the feeling what we share now after all things went well Hi!. We received WPC permission just In time.

While the QTH and WPC application were progressing, Sangeeth flew back home from his A45 QTH and started taking notes on equipment to carry. Though it may sound like trivial for our three day activation with three members, we wanted to maximize QSOs for IOTA chasers around the world and operate with high rigor. It was also decided that it is not necessary to seek any external funding for this activation. All equipment were then tested to make travel ready and packed. Sangeeth had most of the equipment to haul. He got surprising help to haul the luggage when his friends VU3PFR Pradeep and VU2MRB Babu extended friendly gesture to co-travel from Kollam to Rameswaram on a larger vehicle.

All certain done, when WPC permission got awarded just on time, immediate next thing was to inform DX bulletins and serious DX chase community. To our surprise there were some IOTA chasers who wanted us to get on 160m, 80m, 6mtr and requesting for sked already. Again we had to keep any urge to explore aside and stick to our plan to operate 40, 20, 17 and 15. For IOTA program, unlike DXCC, there is no special credit for contacting on multiple bands and multiple modes. Some of VU DX veterans advised us to stay on fewer bands and modes and go deep with pileups. This was the most helpful hint for the activation we had. Else we would have been doing only terrace antenna work till the end Hi Hi!

Arriving at Rameswaram

Rameswaram being very popular pilgrimage destination, we did not had much problem getting to the Island and neither any difficulty with language. Every Auto driver was able to converse to our surprise in Hindi!. Kiran and Manoj had started together from Bangalore on 5th night time bus and reached Rameswaram by 8AM. After checkin, freshening up and breakfast at the Hotel Tamil Nadu, we inspected the terrace for antenna locations, structures to support. Then arranged one of the two rooms we booked as our operation area. We had planned for 40m vertical and rest of the bands on Spiderbeam. In our planning we then made a quick change to include second vertical for 17m, just incase only 20m and 17m opened together.

By the time we finished initial ground work, Sangeeth arrived with friends from Kollam. After lunch, we started working on Spiderbeam and then verticals. Hotel manager had strict instructions on not to damage the property by drilling, hammering walls for Antenna work. Thanks to abandoned large hot water heater on the terrace which became base for Spiderbeam mast and solar panel base which was supporting verticals. All antennas were held with ropes and cable ties and they stood all OK till the end!

Turning on the radios:

We were done with Antenna work by around 6:30 PM on 6th. All TX and RX paths were checked once again for cables, filters, and amplifiers interconnects etc. Switching on the Radios, it sounded horribly tainted with some noise all across. Probably a geostorm we thought as overall propagation was erratic. Ignorant of any other fact, checked published frequencies, started giving CQ calls with amps set to legal limit. IOTA chasers from around the globe were hearing us loud and clear, but we did not hear much due to noise levels. Thanks to internet connectivity, we started seeing some of the ugliest comments on DX clusters such as “Deaf”, “No RX”, “#$#%^” etc.

Concluding that there is local noise issue and with a feeling of devastation, we started our search all over the terrace for noise sources such as cable TV boxes, halogen lamps around the premises etc. Nothing moved SWR meter needle from 58, 59+ noise to lower side. Time was running out and at around 11 PM at night, suddenly we observed that noise reduced in steps of couple of S units each time! We rushed outside to see a security guard switching off corridor LED lights. Voila! We asked him to switch ON and OFF for couple of times to confirm noise levels on radio. What an unexpected source and we got relieved, now knowing about it. Still, 54- 55 noise level was there and staff was reluctant to completely switch off all lights without management permissions. We went to sleep, with hope to convince management about this cause the next morning. Our log showed less than 150 entries in first 12 hours of antennas being up.

Next morning it showed lower noise till about 8AM and suddenly increased levels after Manager’s room and reception lounge opened. Crazy bunch of us did make an early morning visit to Manager to explain our situation. He was very helpful to understand our concern and started to address the issue immediately. Electricians got instructions to make temporary arrangements for lightings and we started running on Radio.

Alas, 15mtr SSB pileup during the day showed good promise. VU2CPL running SSB pileup while VU2WH running on CW on 17mtr got us going. Physical separation and orientation of the beam versus vertical helped us to minimize interaction (in addition to band pass filters applied in line). We rotated operation amongst ourselves to ensure atleast one station up most of the time. Slowly swinging Spiderbeam at night due to high winds helped us to control EU and JA pileups. Being from Bangalore, I seldom get to see so many JA stations. Churning station after station on a rhythm helped crowd control. Electrical Voltage was much stable on the island. Though there were instances of abrupt shutdowns for short intervals, on premise generators kept us going. There was one time when we were running pileup barefoot 10 watts CW without amp turned on!. When power came back Sangeeth realized and we wondered for some time on magical conditions we had.

NA was hardest path for us to get through. We paused for SA/NA time to time as per VOACAP predictions charts. Only handful stations worked us on 20 and 17m during slim openings in evening times. Overall our operation went much smoother with QSO rates up to 130 /hr at peak time. Gnana visited us from Ramanathapuram and stayed overnight keenly watching us operating and clicking snaps for social web updates. We were very glad to have him around and spent good time discussing DXing techniques.

Time ran quickly, as we approached 8th evening, Manoj had to travel back to Bangalore. San and team wanted to leave by 8AM on next day (9th) morning to cover their 10+ hours of road travel. So we decided to close down operation on 8th late night when bands seemed to close. We ended up logging just over 2500 QSOs in the log. Early morning on 9th we started dismantling and packing. By 7:30 AM, we had all done with terrace cleanup to leave it as we found it two days ago. After breakfast, San, Pradeep and Babu left for Kollam. It was my turn to finish checkout formalities, merging the QSO logs and submitting them to Clublog/QSL Manager.

Such a short visit and we already had some connect with people and place. Hope all of them will remember crazy bunch who placed odd looking stuff on their terrace and came to them for switching off lights!

With ringing ears and having a sag on the face, I then took bus to Madurai for my return flight to Bangalore.

Food and Stay Notes:

TTC hotel – Hotel Tamilnadu was comfortable and staff was very helpful in every aspect. Restaurant served clean vegetarian food which was simple and tasty. As we went for dedicated operation, we did not find any need to explore outside this time. Old block facing sea turned out to be the best location for ham radio!

Activation best practices:

Every opportunity is a learning ground for all, we took some lineage from our earlier experiences, other operations and experts. Following are my notes:

1. Maximize operation at DX QTH-
    a. Research the location upfront using Google, maps, friends or scouting it yourself
    b. Plan for equipment and antennas upfront and do not experiment on the spot
    c. Identify antenna positions and cable lengths required

    We had planned and sketched our shack equipment placement and terrace antennas in advance. We only had to do chose optimal one once we reached there.

2. Check propagation charts and prepare operating schedules accordingly with all operators getting equal chance to operate and have fun
3. For the short teams, lesser the bands /modes to operate the better. Plan it well.
4. Get QSL manager aligned to help the program with QSL requests and update details of QSL route on QRZ.com page in advance
5. Keep DX community, pilots, QSL managers engaged before, during and after the operation
6. Always go with split operation and latest logging software
7. During the operation, never let QSO rhythm loose. It helps in pileup under control
8. Finally be open for unexpected situation. All plans work only in expected situation, did we know about "LED noise" and planned for it ??

73,

Kiran VU3KPL

JAYU - VU2JAU IN PUNE

VU2JAU OM Jayu from Gwalior visited my shack and had a family eyeball QSO with xyl Snehal.

Jayu is my good old friend from Gwalior and we have participated together in several Himalayan Car rallies around 1985.

Very humble and caring friend who makes surrounding pleasant with his presence.

His visit to my shack was nostalgic for me. Hence this sharing.

73, Vilas Rabde - VU2VPR
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A Date with VU2SDN–Sahruddin Former President, ARSI

Sahruddin, VU2SDN – 84 years old veteran ham, former President of Amateur Radio Society of India, who has QSYed to Gurgaon, presented a strong case for an eyeball at his new QTH. OM Sahruddin, Assistant Wireless Adviser, superannuated in 1990 after serving in WPC, Ministry of Communications. Of late, VU2SDN has not been active on RF on account of ill-health. Sahar sahab's daughter Sabeeha wished him to be active on radio again and wondered if an eyeball with few local hams in Gurgaon was possible for due encouragement.

VU2ATN – Atanu and VU2OEC – Rajesh recapitulated the memories of VU2SDN's active radio days. Atanu remembered many of his professional accomplishments in the field of Telecom during the tenure of Sahruddin in Ministry of Communications. The duo presented him the "On World Amateur Radio One Language" badge to trigger/revive the radio flame in him.

Sahruddin's harmonic shared many fond memories of his active days as President, ARSI and recent eyeball with VU2NB (Sharan). She thanked us for the wonderful eyeball.

Perhaps it is the obligation of every ham to see to it that the interest among veteran hams should not die due to ill-health. VU Hams are urged to locate and revive the veteran hams and thank them for the great contribution towards Amateur Radio.

Rajesh Chandwani, VU2OEC
Regional Coordinator, ARSI
Gurgaon (Haryana)

Youngsters On The Air

Saturday 16 July, the 6th **Youngsters on the Air** week started with over 100 youngsters from 30 Region-1 member societies, including an IARU Region-2 team from USA, and a team from South Africa.

The YOTA week is being hosted by the Austrian member society, OeVSV at Wagrain in the Austrian mountains. OeVSV is proudly celebrating their 90th anniversary.

The youngsters will be having a lot of fun with amateur radio, there will be many workshops, they will be optimising their skills in electronics and contesting and will make new international friends.

Some activities are - SOTA, COTA, propagation in an ice cave, constructing a homebrew HF antenna and using the antenna for a SOTA station, working with a Raspberry Pi and making a WSPR beacon or using it with DV4mini for digital voice, HAMNET (amateur radio and internet network) and the famous inter-cultural evening where everyone brings food and drinks from their home country.

On Monday 18 July at 10:25 UTC, there will be a telebridge ARISS contact with astronaut **Jeff Williams, KD5TVQ**, which will give the youth an unforgettable experience. More information and live updates of the event are available at www.ham-yota.com/austria/.

If you would like to make a QSO with one of the youngsters, listen out for **OE2YOTA** which will be on air on most bands using several different modes.

The Austrian **Youngsters On The Air** team have released the first of their daily videos

The Day 1 video shows the erection of the impressive 40m mast with Optibeam OB9-5 antenna, watch it at :

http://www.ham-yota.com/yota-austria-newsflash/

GWALIOR, M.P.

Apparently there is a lot of activity in and around Gwalior, thanks to Jayu, VU2JAU.

The Gwalior Amateur Radio club held it's monthly meeting on 17 July 2016 at 10.30 a.m. at Hotel Srikrishna, Padav, Gwalior.

OM Jayu VU2JAU welcomed all the members present. Jayu informed everyone about the activities done earlier. He reported that the CW training for Blind girls of Atma Jyoti Kanya Vidyalaya was completed and certificates to all have been distributed.

Five days training at Amravati was successfully completed along with 2 days lecture in Amravati University to all professors and lecturers of different colleges.

ASOC Exam at Gwalior was successfully conducted on 7 July. HAM Radio program in R.K.V.M. Gwalior was also organized.

Mock drill on HAM Radio communication was nicely conducted in Ratangarh and Sindh River area. Future activities are also planned In the end Jayu requested to registered for HFI 2016 at Mt. Abu on 5 & 6 November 2016.

Meeting was attended by om Kailash VU3CTP, Subodh VU3UTS, Vivek Joshi VU3JOS, N.Tunia VU3TNG, Ashok Bhatanagar VU3YAE, Sunil Goyal VU3WGS, SWLs Neelam, C. Makhija, Dr. Kapil Govil, and Sumit Agrawal. Meeting adjourned with tea and biscuits.

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