

Theory and Morse classes are major activities of many of the larger clubs in the country. But Indian clubs cannot take any particular credit for either publicising their own activities or informing the general public about upcoming radio classes. Indian radio clubs are just as bad as Western clubs about publicity but somehow potential amateurs find out about classes anyway.

Many Indian clubs have found it convenient to organise a crash 20 to 30 day course for teaching radio theory to an ideal class size of 20 to 30 students. Students being trained in a group can opt to be examined as a group if there are more than 20 candidates. When exam time comes, one of the 19 regional wireless monitoring stations will send its examination officers to conduct the exam at a place convenient to the group — probably its college, school of meeting place. Officers travel to the place of examination at the Government's expense; the travel costs are not recovered from the candidates.

The theory portion of the exam is made up with questions from radio theory, international and Indian regulations and operating procedures. The theory exam has a duration of one hour and the paper is divided into two parts: one deals with theory and the other covers regulations and procedures. A pass mark must be obtained in each section.

The exam paper is often common for Grades 1 and 2 but Grade 2 candidates are required to answer only half of the questions while Grade 1 candidates have to answer two thirds of the questions. The Advanced Grade paper has a duration of three hours with questions of a significantly higher technical level. Candidates holding a degree in telecommunications can be exempted from section A for the Advanced or any grade of license. (Oddly enough the exams are not standardised as the Bombay exam is different from the one used in Madras etc.)

Apart from group exams amateur examinations are held once a month in Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. Some other regional wireless monitoring centres hold exams four to six times a year. Cost is Rs40 for Advanced and Grade 1 and Rs25 for Grade 2. Unless renewed every two years the licence lapses

automatically.

These rules and regulations are straightforward enough but the need for a simplified approach to amateur radio regulation in India, in general, is reflected in some of the rules.

- (1) At the time of renewal, an amateur must show proof of 100 contacts in the previous two years.
- (2) The minimum age for applying for an amateur licence is 18 years which is sometimes relaxed to 16 years for Grade 1, and 14 years for Grade 2 licences.
- (3) Log books must be kept for inspection although some countries have abolished this regulation.
- (4) Log book times must be kept in IST (Indian Standard Time) although the rest of the world uses GMT.
- (5) It is also required that a summary of experiments conducted be recorded in an amateur's log books.
- (6) A register of equipment has to be maintained in India.
- (7) It is no longer possible to have a second station at a different location; a change of address has to be applied for instead.
- (8) India has reciprocal licensing arrangements with several countries but foreigners are required to stay for a year in India before they can obtain a licence. (This is in violation of international reciprocal agreements!)
- (9) Although emergency communications are now permitted, messages can only be officially sent to and from district magistrates, deputy commissioners of collectors. (Had this regulation been followed to the letter during the Morvi disaster there would have been no lifeline communication links between the Home Guards, relief agencies, refugees, police and government officials.)
- (10) Club stations cannot be operated by members unless authorised in writing by the central Government.

Even if all rules and regulations are followed it can take up to a year between taking the exam and the day when the ticket arrives. And even if the relevant code and theory exam is passed an applicant may still fail the security clearance. If there is any evidence that the use of amateur radio may be used for anti-state

activities, no licence will ever be granted nor will any reason be given by the licensing authorities.

Getting on the air

Assuming that all rules and regulations and exams and clearances are passed the obstacles to actually getting on the air are not over! Obtaining suitable equipment has always been a block to the development of amateur radio in India.



Tradition even plays a role in ham conventions. A South Indian classical dance opened the Fifth All India Amateur Radio Convention in Bombay.

Before World War 2 almost all equipment was homemade as nothing was either manufactured in the country or allowed to be imported. After the war was over large quantities of surplus equipment flooded the market. This period, lasting some 10 to 15 years, saw the closest thing to 'off the shelf' equipment. It meant hams were able to pick up gear at moderate prices and convert or modify it to their needs.

The post war days were the days of BC348s, 779s, AR88s and HROs. But equipment from then, while virtually gone from the disposal markets, hasn't disappeared entirely because such vintage machines still form the receiving link in the average ham shack in India. Few amateurs in the country have mastered receiver