

Wide Angle



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Ham Radio: For Kings and Commoners

Somehow, I will always remember the clear booming voice of the late King Hussein of Jordan, which I first heard, on a ham radio receiver over 35 years ago.

This recollection of my school-time memory is caused by two seemingly unrelated events.

Firstly, the news I read on Wednesday 22 February, that UAE's Nayif-1 satellite has beamed, for the first time across the world from space, a special message from Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice President of UAE and the Ruler of Dubai.

And that Nayif-1's main mission objective is "to send and receive messages on amateur radio frequencies".

Secondly, a documentary I watched on Tuesday 21 February, on Al Jazeera News Channel, titled "King Hussein of Jordan: Survival of a dynasty" which gave a glimpse into the life of a leader who reigned in the most turbulent times of Middle East.

And it is a well-known fact that the late king was a great "amateur radio broadcaster" known to the world of radio enthusiasts as JY1.

The nanosatellite Nayif-1 - one of the 104 satellites launched by India from its Satish Dhawan Space Centre, about a week ago - was developed by seven engineering students of the American University of Sharjah in collaboration with the space centre.

And now, according to a news report in UAE's "The National", "Amateur radio operators as far as Japan and Chile have received data from Nayif-1, originating from its ground station at the American University of Sharjah (AUS) and relayed via the satellite".

"Ham radio operators in Spain, Sweden, Haiti, the US, and even those out to sea, took to twitter to say they were receiving the satellite's message loud and clear".

Amazing! Three decades ago, these transmissions may not have been loud and clear. But they shocked and surprised me and my friends.

In the early 80s, I was among the high school students taken to an exhibition on electronics, in Hyderabad, India.

In a large enclosed area, a hundred people were eagerly waiting for a demonstration that could be called simply astounding, for those days and times!

Wireless two-way radio connection between India and Jordan was absolutely unthinkable then. But a ham radio operator, and his assistants were trying to show us the new power of telecommunications.

They turned the dials and pressed the buttons on electronic consoles with small meters and quivering pointers. The speakers were emanating sounds of scratchy, crackling of static which old radios make.

And we were told that King Hussein of Jordan would soon speak to this Hyderabad Ham Radio operator, who has been his friend for long.

The two had never physically seen each other. But, from the time they met 'online' when the frequency on which King Hussein was transmitting matched the frequency on which this man was transmitting, they were in regular contact.

Now, as a part of this electronics exhibition, they had both decided to give a wonderful demonstration to an awestruck audience which, luckily, included me.

I clearly remember the king saying "Good evening! Greetings from Jordan". And everyone gasped, and clapped, and went hush! And then the king mentioned the time in Jordan, and how the weather was, there, at that time. And a few other things I don't remember.

I was simply too young to understand the words, the technology, or its significance then.

But today, I am excited to find YouTube clips with late King Hussein's voice as he talks to some other radio operators -- including one in a space shuttle!

With WhatsApp and Skype and several other instant forms of communication around, it is good to see that the hobby of Ham Radio is still alive and thriving.

(The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of this newspaper.)

Yemen rebel rocket fire kills policeman

Riyadh, Rocket fire by Yemeni rebels killed a policeman and wounded a civilian on the Saudi side of the border, said civil defence department.

They were the latest casualties inside the kingdom since Saudi Arabia began leading an Arab military coalition that intervened in its southern neighbour to support President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi in March 2015.

Video footage circulating on social media showed shattered glass and a trail of blood at the entrance to a court building in Dhahran South that its posters said was the aftermath of the rocket strike.

The building's front wall was pockmarked from shrapnel. A guard house appeared to have taken the brunt of the strike, and a policeman sat slumped and bloodied in his chair, apparently dead. -(AFP)



Representational image



Actors dressed during a performance on Saudi's Comic-Con

Saudi's first Comic-Con fest cited for 'violation'

Riyadh

Organisers of Saudi Arabia's first Comic-Con pop culture festival will be penalised over a "violation", the government's entertainment agency said yesterday.

The three-day festival of anime, pop art, video gaming and film-related events attracted thousands last weekend in the Red Sea city of Jeddah.

"The General Authority for Entertainment regrets the violation committed by the organisers of the Comic-Con event in one of the activities," a statement from the authority said.

It added that the authority's priority is "safeguarding values, morals and traditions" in any entertainment presented to the public.

It said an appropriate penalty would be issued.

Missing Pets



SOPHIE - Female Labrador Retriever, 1 yr, spayed, brown leather collar and necklace/string around her neck - no ID, Sar Avenue (Al Massarah compound), BD100 REWARD for safe return, 19/2/17. **39938001** or **39966703**



BLUE - Male Red Point Siamese, 1 yr, not wearing collar or ID, gate left open, may have been STOLEN, Saar (Almarkh 35 Ave/Cinema Saar), 19/1/17, BD50 REWARD, **35637527** or **35016599**



LOUIE - Male Siamese, 5 yrs, right canine tooth slightly chipped, neutered, not wearing collar or ID, garden cat - went over the high fences, may have been STOLEN, Barbar (near Jawad Dome), BD500 REWARD, 9/2/17. **36326666**



TINKER BELL - Female Shitzu mix, 3 yrs, spayed, black w white mark on chest/chin, wearing patterned collar, followed someone out, suspect STOLEN, behind St Christophers Junior School (by Twin Palms Riding School), 12/1/17. **39975151**



JUNIOR - Male Husky/Malamute mix, black/white, one blue/one brown eye, 1 yr, gate left open, not wearing collar or ID, Janabiya (next to El-Mercado Mall & Al-Ayam newspaper), 17/1/17, REWARD 300BD, **66656566/39696716/39666004/33446564**



CASPAR - Male Persian, 5 yrs, white, coat recently clipped, neutered, no collar, very friendly, Busaiten (behind petrol station), presumed STOLEN, 11/9/16, 100BD REWARD. WhatsApp **33215166** or phone **36847712**