

## A visit to AIR, Alappuzha

-Jose Jacob, VU2JOS

Alappuzha is a coastal district HQ of Kerala State in South India. It is known as Venice of the East and is a backwater tourist centre. Alappuzha earlier called Alleppey is famous for its boat races, houseboat holidays, beaches, marine products, and coir industry. In this district, there is a place called Kuttanad, the Rice Bowl of Kerala, which is one of the few places in the world where farming is done below the sea level.

Alappuzha is about 85 kms south of my native place in Kerala which I visit from time to time. During my recent trip to attend a Hamfair in the nearby District in April 2008, I took the opportunity to visit the All India Radio station at Alappuzha with prior appointment. I visited them with a local ham friend. The station is located about 7 kms away from the town on the highway.



First we were asked to go to the AIR office at Patirappally, a couple of kms near the transmitter site. There we met the AIR official who wanted to know the purpose of our visit as visitors are not normally allowed there now days. Seeing our interest and several of my old qsl letters from their station, he understood that we were genuine listeners and gave us permission to visit his station. The official went in his official car while we followed in my friend's car. As usual there was a security at the gate but we were let in without any security checks.



The transmitter site is located at Kalavoor in 13 hectares of land. The station set up consists of 2 umbers of 100 KW BEL HMB 140 transmitters made by Bharat Electronics Ltd, Bangalore operating on 576 kHz with a power of 200 kW. It is known as High Power Transmitter and is the most powerful station in Kerala State. Transmitter 1 is named as Lakshmi while Transmitter 2 is named as Parvathi. During the time of my visit, the first transmitter was running at about 95 kW while the second one was running at about 105 kW of power! These transmitters were commissioned on 15 April 1999. There is a small emergency studio near the transmitters. The antenna is a self radiating mast 175 Meters high. The station covers the central districts of Kerala State about 70 kms radius. It is a full time relay station, relaying AIR Thiruvananthapuram which operates on 1161 kHz, 5010 & 7290 kHz. Most of the programs are in Malayalam, the local language (My mother tongue). The program feed is received via satellite. Occasionally they also relay AIR Thrissur & Kozhikode. Their monthly electricity bill now comes to Rs.9.5 Lakhs!



All India Radio Alappuzha first started on July 17, 1971 with a 100 kW NEC MB 121 B transmitter which operated on 580 kHz. This frequency was changed to 576 kHz in the MW frequency reshuffle on 23 November 1978. This transmitter was replaced by the 2 new transmitters presently in use. The old transmitter which was in another part of the building has now been dismantled.

Due to staff shortage, at present there is no Station / Suptg. Engineer at this station, an Asst. Station Engineer is the head of the station now.

**The broadcast schedule of the station is: (in Indian Time)**

Transmission I : 5.50 am to 10.00 am (Sat, Sun up to 11.10 pm)

Transmission II : 12.00 pm to 3.30 pm (Weekdays)

Transmission III : 5.00 pm to 11.10 pm (Weekdays)

As Radio Nepal, Myanmar and other stations use the same frequency of this station, it may not be very easy to pick up this station outside South India. The address of the station is All India Radio, Pathirapally, Alappuzha 688521, Kerala. Its email id is [airalpy@rediffmail.com](mailto:airalpy@rediffmail.com) and Tel Nos are 0477-2258397, 2258611. I have received several verifications in the past from the station. A copy one is available at:

<http://www.qsl.net/vu2jos/qsls/allapuzha.jpg>

The map of AIR stations in Kerala showing Alappuzha is available at:

<http://www.airtvm.com/stations.html>

**Transmitter details summary:**

17 Jul 71: NEC MB 121 B 580 kHz 100 kW

23 Nov 78: Frequency changed to 576 kHz

15 Apr 99: HEL HMB 140 2x100 kW



(My Ham friend Jayan, VU2JYU who took me to AIR Alappuzha, in his shack)

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