

POSTAL NEWS

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1. Coffee table book traces Indian postal system's story

In the early 17th century, long before the times of email and mobile phones, pigeons, barefoot runners and bullock carts were used to carry messages between one part of India to another.

The postman cycle of the early 1800s, with its large front tyre, post boxes in all sizes and shapes collected from all over the country as well as the antique stamp printing presses can now be seen in photographs in a new book.

The coffee table book "Pigeons to Post" by Steve Borgia, released at the ongoing world philatelic exhibition 'Indipex 2011' in the national capital traces the story of the origin and the evolution India's postal history over a period of nearly two thousand years.

Borgia travelled across India and the world to gather every bit of collectibles that would piece together the history of the country's postal history. Photographs of old postoffices, dilapidated post boxes dating back several hundred years, stamp printing presses that are now antiquated, he has it all.

"Initially I wanted to display all the items I collected in a museum but the postal department stressed on the need for a book. The research and sourcing for the book has been going on for the past 15 years," Borgia told PTI during the inauguration of Indipex.

Since there was very less material available on the mail-runners, Borgia had to take help from British archives, retired post masters and the books written by post generals before 1947.

"The mail-runner in earlier times not only carried people's messages but they also carried their emotions and hopes. They used to write and read out letters for people. They had a simple lifestyles compared to their British bosses and were the real backbone of the postal system," says Borgia.

Clippings from the repositories of the London Mail, illustrations from the Global Post and etchings from the French and English artists as well as data and pictures sourced from the British and Delhi postal archives and museum of the colonial days helped piece the book together.

One of the highlights of the book according to the author is the section on line drawings on the mail runners fighting natural calamities like wild animals and flooded rivers for delivering the mails in time.

Borgia feels the postal department is facing competition from new technology in the times of Internet and it is trying hard to stay in the hunt.

"Postal department is doing a lot of things other than just delivering letters. Infact, they have to do more than what they can to stay relevant today. It is a big challenge for them," he says.

The 51-year-old author, who also runs a chain of hotels in South India, has created small museums inside his hotels to display his various collections.

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2. Danish 'text-a-stamp' postal service to launch

By Zack Whittaker | March 13, 2011, 7:06am PDT

Denmark and Sweden are both working towards a text message replacement of stamps for the postal system. Will it rejuvenate the Generation Y to use snail mail?

Zack Whittaker is a British student at the University of Kent in Canterbury, UK working towards a BA (Hons) Criminology and Social Policy.

In between studying, drinking, and occasionally sleeping, he has already had a series unconventional work and voluntary positions. He has worked with researchers studying neurological illnesses like Tourette's syndrome (which he suffers from), has given lectures on the nature of disabilities in the public community, and occasionally ends up speaking on television and radio discussing the events of the day.

Despite his young age, he may appear inexperienced and misguided, but don't be fooled. At the grand age of 22, he has already totalled up many years of work, education, knowledge and general (mis)adventure.

From April, the Danish postal service will introduce the Mobile Postal Service, which will revolutionise the way how the snail mail system will work, by allowing letter senders to text for a stamp replacement.

For standard letters, users will be able to send a text message to receive a code to write on the envelope, removing the need to buy postal stamps and do away with the inconvenience of taking away precious time in our increasingly busy, technologically driven lives.

The code will be charged to the mobile device user, and will cost around 70 cents (just under £1), which is the current price of a stamp plus the cost of the text message. It must also be used within 7 days of purchase.

The Generation Y are the least likely users of the traditional snail mail postal system, with technologically driven means taking priority over others. It may encourage younger users to use the postal system, but the lack of instant communications will again hamper the efforts of reaching out to the younger, more impatient generation.

It seems the only reason the younger generations would use the postal system, in my experience, is for receiving bills and letters, naturally, but sending items larger than a personal letter.

It is rare for me to go to the post office, and when I do it's to exchange currency or send items back of larger quantity, such as phones and gadgets I am not pleased with and hoping for a return. Yet not is all lost, with a mutual friend taking a year out in France to study in an exchange programme, regularly sending letters back to England in a Bronte-style romanticist effort to rekindle the love for personal letter writing.

Sweden, however, is reported to be considering using the system for larger items weighing up to 2kg in weight.

It's just not my preferred method of communication, along with an entire generation of younger people.

When was the last time you sent a letter?

Kick off your day with ZDNet's daily e-mail newsletter. It's the freshest tech news and opinion, served hot. Get it.

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3. Postal department cloud over kendu plucking

Sumitra Behera, TNN, Mar 12, 2011, 11.14pm IST

DHENKANAL: The fate of thousands of kendu leaf pluckers here hangs in the balance as the postal department is yet to ready their savings accounts for wage transfer next month when plucking commences.

As many as 10,000 tribal women are engaged in kendu plucking in Kamakshyanagar subdivision, 30 to 50 km from Dhenkanal. Plucking will start from the first week of April and continue till the second week of May.

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4. Govt. committed to make postal services more people friendly: Sibal

2011-03-09 20:40:00

Union Communications and Information Technology Minister Kapil Sibal on Wednesday said the government is committed to make the postal services more people friendly.

Launching an "e-post office", the e-Commerce portal of India Post here today, Sibal said that in the changing world, the ways we live are changing. Launch of e-Post is a step in this direction offering a bouquet of services to the consumers.

"This is inline with shift in marketing trend of service provider reaching the consumers," he added.

The portal will enable the customers to transact postal business any time and from anywhere using either debit card or credit card through the medium of Internet.

Welcoming the initiative, Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Sachin Pilot earlier said that after e-Medicine, e-Commerce, e-Education etc. it is appropriate to have e-Post.

He, however, asked to make the portal available in regional languages too for the benefit of the common man.

The e-Post Office, an ambitious project of India Post, will offer seven services in the first phase launched today. These services are, Electronic Money Order (eMO), Instant Money Order (iMO), Sale of Philatelic Stamps, Postal information, Tracking of Express and International Shipments, PIN Code Search and Registering of feed back and complaints.

With this the Department of Posts has taken an important step towards fulfilling its commitment of making the postal services more inclusive and more accessible to the citizens of the country.

One of the focus areas of the first phase of e-Post Office is on the Money Order service. Launched 130 years ago, in 1880, the original paper based system of money orders is still in vogue.

Though India Post has introduced electronic variants in the form of eMO and iMO, the e-Post Office will re-vamp the money order thoroughly, after 130 years of its launch, by harnessing the state of art information technology. This is also expected to contribute substantially to the revenue of the Department in the years to come.

India Post has collaborated with agencies in the public and private sector to make the e-Post Office a reality. Concrete plans are in place to scale up the portal to a full-fledged e-Market Place, which would offer a wide range of postal and non-postal products. India Post's core competency in the mail-parcel segment will be leveraged for e-Commerce order fulfillment. (ANI)

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5. Postal Service loses \$451 million in January

Frank Washkuch

March 08, 2011

The US Postal Service reported a net loss of \$451 million in January when mail volume at the organization decreased 1.3% year-over-year to 13.7 billion pieces. The organization, which has said it could run out of money this fiscal year, decreased work hours by 3.3% in January, compared with the prior year.

January operating revenue at the USPS decreased 2% year-over-year to \$5.5 billion.

In the first four months of its 2011 fiscal year, the USPS has reported a total net loss of \$781 million. The Postal Service's total mail volume has been flat so far this fiscal year, increasing 0.9%, according to data provided by the Postal Regulatory Commission.

Revenue from mailing services, the vast majority of the organization's business, dropped 2.5% in January to \$4.8 billion. The Postal Service saw revenue from shipping services increase 1.7% year-over-year to \$701 million during the month. Total postal service revenue was down 2% year-over-year to \$5.5 billion in January.

For the first four months of fiscal year 2011, revenue from mailing services decreased 3.1% to \$20.1 billion, while revenue from shipping grew 1.7% year-over-year to \$3.3 billion. Total revenue for the fiscal year to date dropped 2.5% year-over-year to \$23.4 billion.

The US Postal Service does not comment on monthly numbers, said Greg Frey, PR representative for delivery, online services, post offices and retail.

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