

EXPRESS DELIVERY

Since the inception of Posts, the Department has taken every step to see that the Mail is delivered as early as possible to its destination. In early days, when there were fewer means of carrying mail, this was achieved by runners being replaced by animals, larger ships being replaced by smaller fast moving vessels and when trains, automobiles and aircraft were invented, these being employed to carry mail.

As time went on, the Postal Department also changed. It brought in a scheme in the early 19th century which was known as "EXPRESS MAIL" – mainly for mail going from Calcutta to outside India. For a fee of 8 as., Mail was accepted for a ship which had already left Calcutta. The mail was dispatched on horse back to Kedgerree, the last steamer point before the start of the voyage. This service was withdrawn in the 1880's.

Slowly the volume of mail increased, resulting in delay in delivery of mail after reaching its destination city. The Postal Department, therefore came up with a new scheme on 1st October 1930 which was known as "EXPRESS DELIVERY". Clauses 28B and 54A of the Indian Postal Guide (1943) deal with this and are self explanatory:

Clause 28B: Express Delivery: Unregistered letters, post cards and book packets may be transmitted by post for express delivery under conditions mentioned in Clause 54A. Express Delivery letters, post cards and book packets will be transmitted like ordinary articles to the post office of destination whence, after the opening of the mails in the usual course, they will be transferred to the nearest Government Telegraph office for delivery like a telegram. Note: The transfer of express delivery letters, post cards and book packets to the nearest Government Telegraph Office for delivery like a telegram applies only to those post offices which are situated at stations where there are Government Telegraph offices and does not apply to post offices at stations where there are no Government Telegraph offices.

Clause 54A: Postage and Conditions of Posting: (1) The fee for express delivery of a letter, postcard or book packet as defined in Clause 28B is two annas in addition to the ordinary postage. (2) Unregistered letters, post cards and book packets may be transmitted by post for express delivery to any place not more than five miles distant from a Government Telegraph Office. (3) Express Delivery letters, postcards and book packets must be conspicuously marked on the address side with the words "Express Delivery", and the fee for express delivery must be prepaid by the sender by means of postage stamps affixed to the letters, postcards, book packets or, in the case of holders of franking machine licenses, by impressions of the franking machine. A special label having words "Express Delivery" printed on it is supplied gratis by the post office and the sender is recommended to use this printed label instead of writing the superscription "Express Delivery". (4) Express Delivery will not be made to any place more than five miles distant from a Government Telegraph Office, and of any letter, postcard or book packet on which both postage and the express delivery fee have not been fully prepaid. Postal articles marked "Express Delivery" which are addressed to a place more than five miles distant from a Government Telegraph Office, or on which the postage and the Express Delivery charges have not been fully prepaid will be treated as ordinary postal articles.

Note: An Express Delivery letter, postcard or book packet once delivered will, on re-direction, be treated as an ordinary article in all respects and dealt with accordingly.

As delivery in this service was made like a telegram, all mail was numbered in manuscript. That is why all used Express Delivery mail is found with a number.

The service was also available for Airmail. Clause 154A(3) deals with this and reads as follows:

Clause 154A(3): Express Delivery System – The Express delivery system is available to inland articles transmitted by air mail on payment of Air mail fee and Express Delivery Charge.

The Express Delivery fee of 2 annas remained unchanged for more than two dec-

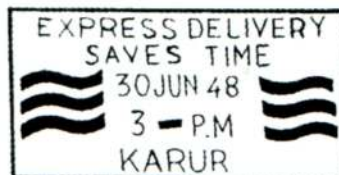
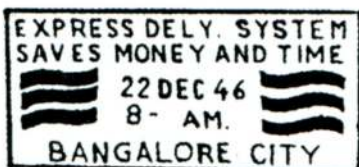
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ades. From 1st October 1930 to 31st March 1957 it was 2 annas. From 1st April 1957 until 1966 it was 13 naya paisa. Then the fee changed to 15 paisa, but the date is not known to the writer. After this, the fee was again changed, to 20 paise and remained the same until the express delivery service was abolished on and from 31st October 1974.

It appears that there was only one type of

Express Delivery label (No. 1) before Independence. It is found in different shades and lettering. After Independence, six different types of labels are found. All are in English except for the last one, which is bilingual. No. 2 was the first label after Independence and may be found in different sizes and lettering.

It further appears that this service was not at all popular in the first ten years of its



existence. Very few covers are found until 1940. To popularize this service, the P & T Department came out with slogan postmarks, the first being used in 1946. It is in a rectangular box reading "EXPRESS DELY SYSTEM/ SAVES MONEY AND TIME" in two lines. The time and date are flanked by 3 wavy lines on both sides. The fifth line deals with the city name. The second was also in a rectangular box, reading "EXPRESS DELIVERY/ SAVES TIME" in two lines and with time, date and city name as before, found used in 1948. The format of the slogan changed to a Duplex type can-

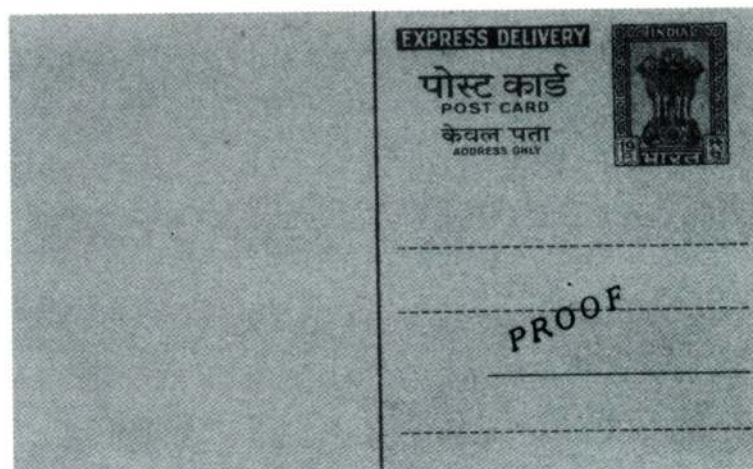
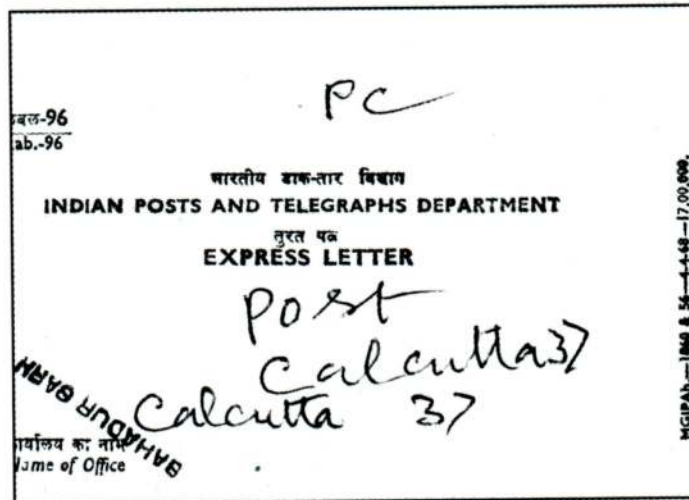
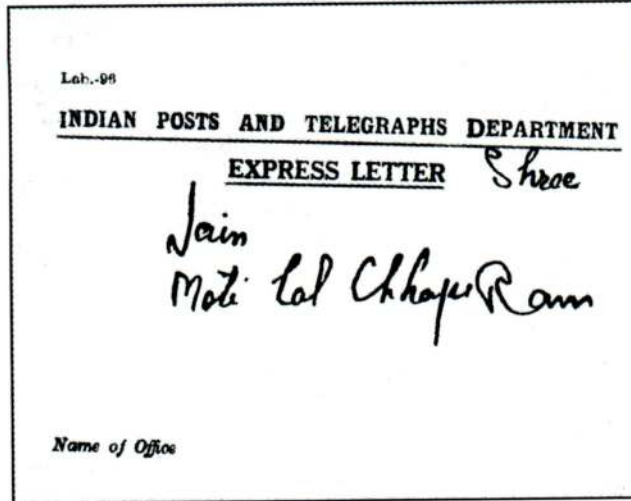
cellation in 1951 and remained in use until service was abolished. Sometimes this slogan is found without Duplex, as a supplementary postmark. A few examples of this slogan are found after its abolition on 31st October 1974.

Until 11th May 1964, there was no special stationery for this service, when an embossed envelope of 28 paise (15 p. postage & 13 p. express fee) was issued. The size of the envelope is 120 X 95mm. Sometime in 1966, essays of Express Delivery Post Cards and Inland Letter Cards were

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made in the denomination of 19 paise and 23 paise respectively, but they were never issued. As the rate of Express delivery fee was changed, a new embossed envelope in the denomination of 20p. + 20p. was issued on 7th September 1970 in size of 120

X 95mm. The stationery was also issued in a commercial size which was 90 X 140mm. After the abolition of the Express Delivery service the special stationery was over-printed and used as ordinary embossed envelopes.



In addition to the above stationery, special envelopes were also issued by the P & T Department for its own use.

These are found in the English Language and bilingual and are very scarce and hard to obtain.

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Before concluding this article, something must be said about the special cancellations used exclusively for this service. These show the words "EXPRESS DELIVERY" or "EXPRESS" or "Exp. DLY" or "E.D" and are very scarce. It seems that very few cities had used these special cancel

lations, which are always found as a delivery postmark. Otherwise Express Delivery mail was delivered with a cachet of the Telegraph Dept. My examples are dated 18.5.65 from Hyderabad G.P.O., 6.9.67 from Bombay G.P.O. and 1.8.70 from Rajkot.

