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SOUTH INDIA PHILATELISTS' ASSOCIATION

(FOUNDED 1956)

(AFFILIATED TO THE PHILATELIC CONGRESS OF INDIA)

Editorial

The condition of philately as a whole in India is not very rosy. Philatelists from the time India became independent have been requesting Department of Posts for improving the quality of service to philatelists, opening of more Philatelic Bureaux, better design of stamps and post marks, attractive thematic stamps, minimising the number of personality stamps in a year, easy availability of stamps. Besides this there is a long list of other suggestions which can be implemented at every stage to improve the philatelic condition in the country. Governments have asked suggestions many times from philatelists which were given to the Department. Even after 46 years of independence no clear and healthy policy for the improvement of philately in our country has formed so that stamp collectors are satisfied and also a way is made for earning a lot of foreign exchange for the country. There is hardly any change in the philatelic condition in all the states of India.

SIPA MEETINGS

SECOND SUNDAY of every month - Regular meeting at the Philatelic Bureau, Anna Road Post Office, Madras - 600 002. (10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.) FIRST AND THIRD SUNDAY of every month - Auction meeting at our Library Hall at 6, Nannian Street, Madras -3 (Timing 10.45 a.m. to 1 p.m.) SIPA Library Open Tuesday & Sunday, 6, Nannian Street, Madras - 3. 7p.m. to 8.p.m.

A mint that churns out more than money

The historic Calcutta mint, biggest in this part of the world, makes coins formulated, tested, controlled and evolved in highly scientific system. Yet, it is not just a place where they make money.

When Satyajit Ray was awarded that Bharat Ratna, few realised that the beautiful, coveted medal in its leaf-shaped body of white gold, standard silver, tombac bronze and copper with the exquisitely engraved platinum sun and the Ashokan capital encased in a lining of the same precious metal, was prepared at an extremely short notice of 15 days!

The Workers of the Government of India mint, Alipore, as it is formally known, are unsung heroes though medal production - including those for defence services, police and the highest awards and orders of the state and nation - is a monopoly they enjoy.

Tracing its origin from the old Calcutta mint established by the British in 1829, the Alipore mint factory situated over 26 acres of land churns out over 500 million coins and about 48,000 medals every year, according to the mint master or General Manager Mr. D N Sarkar who points out that famous scientist Sir Isaac Newton was also a mint master at the mint of England.

European traders who came to India established their own mints, So while the Dutch had mints at Palicate, Cochin, Tuticorin, the Danes in Tranquebar, Surat,

Contd. Page 56

All communications relating to Bulletin may please be addressed to

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Sowcarpet, Madras - 600 079.

A mint that Conted....

Chandrannagar, the British first set up a mint in Madras, then in Bombay and Calcutta.

Later, the Madras mint closed down but the Bombay and Calcutta mints are still working. The venue of the latter has changed while Bombay holds the distinction of harbouring the oldest working mint in the country.

Though the old Calcutta mint was functioning to full capacity, need arose for a new coin factory around 1940. A sophisticated mint was finally commissioned at Alipore in 1952 with a capacity of 12 lakh coin pieces per eight hour shift.

The grand structure of the Alipore mint, built in imposing Gothic style over extensive grounds comes into view the moment one crosses the bridge over the famous Tolly's Nallah at Majerhat on way to the Behala suburbs by Diamond Harbour Road.

Besides meeting the numismatic demands of India, the mint also caters to foreign countries. Altogether 65,61,957 coins were produced by the Alipore mint for the Bhutan Government between 1952 and 1977. It is currently negotiating a deal to produce police medals for the tiny central pacific island of Nauru.

The massive output of the Alipore mint comes despite deterrents like a 50 years old technology, says Mr.

Sarkar, adding that a two year modernisation programme involving Mecon is in the pipeline.

"Once modern equipment from European countries is made available, the output would increase manifold", according to the administrative officer, Mr. D. Mukherjee.

Of the four Indian mints at Bombay, Calcutta, Hyderabad and Noida, the last is the most modern with sophisticated high-technology equipment. "However, they only stamp the stainless steel blanks imported from abroad for the new shiny small 10 paise, 25 paise coins" Mr Sarkar points out.

The Alipore mint, like Bombay and Hyderabad takes care of the entire coinage process starting from melting the metals and getting the right alloy combinations for making the ingots, rolling into sheets, cuttings blanks as per coin size and stamping them.

The dirty looking whitish 5, 10, 20 paise smaller denomination coins are made of aluminium magnesium alloy, called "al-mag" with a composition of 95 per cent aluminium and five per cent magnesium, according to Mr sarkar.

The proposed five-rupee coin would be of cupro-nickel, the most popular alloy for coinage worldwide. However, all lower denominations would be replaced with stainless steel, considering its longer life span and lower metal value, the general manager said.

"The technology needed for making stainless steel blanks is not available with us yet, hence, the modernisation programme" Mr. Sarkar explains.

While, the paper on which the currency notes are printed just have face value, the coins and medals also have a metal value. the difference between the face value and metal value is kept to the minimum varying between five per cent to seven per cent - due to economic necessity.

Mr Sarkar recalls how when the metal value of copper had risen people had started melting the copper coins in vogue then for use elsewhere.

"Waste of metal is always avoided and sheets from which blanks are cut and the faulty coins are all again melted for further use", says Mr Ranadhir Roy, assistant bullion accountant.

The Bharat Ratna presented to Ray, with 41 gms of platinum along with other metals, had a metal value of about Rs.1.16 lakh, says Mr. Dwijen Bhattacharya, assistant chargemen, running his experienced eyes around the medalsection as he takes.

The obvious pride and joy of the Alipore mint is that this section employs about 150 of the over 2800 workers in the factory unit and by itself handles all national medal demands.

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A mint thatConted

This includes orders from the defence ministry, State Governments, educational institutions and during special occasions like the international film festival, national film festivals and numerous sporting events, including the '82 Asiad.

The galaxy of medals deigned and carved here is displayed with an unmistakable sense of achievements. The place of honour goes of course to the Bharat Ratna - "We have the least orders for this", quips Bhattacharya.

Then come the Padmashree, the Padma Bhushan the Padma Vibhushan, the Paramvir Chakra Mahavir Chakra, Kirti Chakra Ashok Chakra... the list seems end less.

"All medals have their own unique identities and our workers initially just clubbed the different parts of the Padmashree, Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan medals designed by the famous painter Nandala Bose. Later he himself suggested a single unit production", says Mr Moloy Karmakar, assistant ministry.

Few realise, he explains, that the number of lotus petals engraved on the Padmashree, the Padma Vibhushan and the Padma Bhushan vary from five, four and three respectively. The medals have a body of bronze and the centre pieces are of 14 carat gold, white gold (a gold and silver composition) or stainless steel depending on the stature.

"Maybe we will never receive one of these, but we definitely have the satisfaction of handling them everyday", he says.

While orders for defence medals are received in lakhs, there are other, made just for special occasions, like the one kg peacock made in gold and silver for the international film festival or the medals for the Asian Games in Delhi.

The best quality gold for medals(14 carat) is used for the B.C Roy memorial medal of IIT Kharagpur. Otherwise, generally, the nine carat gold is used, says Karmakar, adding warningly, "don't get carried away, we also make the ubiquitous milk tokens and standard weights".

The factory area is dark, lighted by the blaze of the furnaces. In the stamping rooms the clutter of falling coins tap out a constant refrain and as a worker places a freshly stamped new fiver on the palm, its warmth sears through the skin.

The work is manual and mechanised and the quality of the shining coins is checked at every stage of production before they are packed into bags destined for the Reserve Bank of India.

Though the Alipore mint carries out bullion operations, the only gold refinery in India is at Bombay, says Mr. Roy.

The security is tight, with the mint's own security

personnel as well as the CRPF and BSF guarding the bastion. "Workers might themselves get tempted at times but tight vigilance and 100 per cent recovery rate thwarts all", says internal security officer, Mr. Sikdar.

"From outside, the mint is aweinspiring and its functions have been secret for long. But now visitors are allowed twice a week", says the administrative officer.

A numismatic museum at mint premises is also on the anvil and the collection would include coins of the Mughal, British and post - independence periods, Famous British gallantry awards, including the Victoria Cross, would also be on display along with recovered old and new counterfeits.

Meanwhile, the Alipore mint one of the most powerful, verstile, highly secret and immensely secure bodies which can either make or break the nation's economic balance continues to stand in all is Gothic grandeur as a beacon of human and mechanical enterprise, a dedication and almost a monument to free India.

Dear Members

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Ed.

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BRITISH CASTLE STAMPS

The Stamps were printed with fluorescent ink should help deter the removal of cancellation for illegal use. The same stamps are shown photographed under full spectrum light. The large oblong perforations also are a security device.

The march 24 release of the revised 1988 high-value Castle definitives of Great Britain marked the beginning of a new era of postage stamp security measures. The stamps feature three different stamp printing security devices that should make them nearly impossible to counterfeit or illegally reuse.

Security features on the news stamps include optically variable and fluorescent inks, as well as a single 3.8-millimeter elongated perforation on each vertical side of a stamp, which is perf 15 by 14, according to the Royal Mail.

The redesigning of these stamps, as well as security measures taken on stamps by postal administrations of other countries (including the United States), is intended to battle against various forms of high-tech fakery, including the color photocopier, which can make remarkably true stamp reproductions.

Shown in the color photograph is arguably the most fascinating (and certainly the most hidden to unknowing eyes) of the security devices included on the new Castle stamps - fluorescent printing ink. The set of four revised Castle definitives was photographed under both full-spectrum and longwave ultraviolet light.

Under normal light, the stamp color appear as dark green (1), magenta (1.50) steel blue (2) and brown (5) Under longwave ultra violet light, the same stamps appear yellow - green light orange, yellow - brown and yellow - orange respectively.

This fluorescence is not a coating place over the printed stamp design, it is present in the pigmented ink itself. Unlike United States stamps, which are phosphorescent, the purpose is not to speed mail processing, but to discourage the practice of chemically removing the cancel from a stamp for reuse. This practice, commonly known as washing, is highly illegal, but rampant in recent years, particularly in Great Britain.

If one attempts to remove the cancellation from a stamp printed with fluorescent ink, the ink dulls, making the alteration visible under UV light.

The queen's head on the new stamps is printed with optically variable ink; that is, ink that changes color depending on what angle it's viewed under. In the case of the Castle stamps, the ink changes from gold to green. The long, elliptical perforation on the side of each stamp adds to the stamp's complexity, making the item harder

to counterfeit.

The entire design of the Castle stamp is printed by line - engraved intaglio on a sheetfed 1-8 press, similar to the currency presses in use at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

According to information supplied by Royal Mail, the press can produce up to 6,000 sheets per hour, with interleaving between sheets to aid drying.

Despite the fact that the optically variable and fluorescent inks are two quite different inks that have different properties and behave differently, only a single printing plate is used to produce the stamps. Separate inking - in rollers are used to apply ink to the different portions of the plate, which then applies the final printed image to the stamp paper."

The optically variable ink technology was borrowed from bank note production, and the large perforations were taken from other security printing.

Royal Mail has announced that "new low value definitive stamps will also be launched in due course which have features which reduce the possibility of imitation, copying or reuse".

This gives collectors something to watch for, quite possibly on Machin - head stamps.

The new high - value Castle definitives seem to be a successful innovation created through the cooperation of Royal Mail and Harrison and Sons printers. It is likely that they will be popular with collectors and unpopular with fakers.

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LIVING PEOPLE SHOWN ON CANADIAN STAMPS

Canada issued a 5 stamps to mark health, or more specifically nurses. It was the 30th anniversary of the Canadian Nurses' Association.

The stamp is inscribed "Health gurards the nation" in English and in French. It shows the head and shoulders of an attractive young lady in traditional nurses garb.

The stamp also depicts a nurse's lamp. This part of the design was taken from a photograph of the concertina lamp used by Florece Nightingale. The lamp is kept at the Florence Nightingale Memorial Hospital, London, England.

Almost immediately after the stamp was issued, the denunciations of the stamp design reached deafening proportions.

Charlotte Whitton, a former Mayor of Ottawa Citizen, wrote in 1958, "It is all the more regrettable that a grateful country, which chose singly to honor them (nurses) by a commemorative stamp, should have allowed such irresponsibility in its concept and design."

And those were her kindest words.

Whitton said it would have been more appropriate to show Jeanne Mance, Canada's first nurse and founder

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of Hotel Dieu (a hospital that still exists in Montreal), and Mary Agnes Sniveley, founder of the Canadian Nursing Association.

Mance was honored with an 8 stamp issued April 18, 1973, (Scott 615) to mark the 300th anniversary of her death.

Sniveley still hasn't been commemorated on a stamp.

The 1958 Health stamp was designed by Gerald Trottier, then 32. He has designed many Canadian stamps, but at that time he was a beginning stamp designer and an artist with the Federal Agriculture Department.

Whatever the political wrangling about the design of an issue, it was not long before it was discovered that the nurse shown on the stamp wasn't nurse at all. She was a typist with a federal government department.

Florence Sullivan, 21at the time, worked for the Federal Trade Department. She was spotted getting on an Ottawa bus by an official with the Federal Health Department. When negotiations were concluded, she agreed to be photographed for a fee of \$5.

The photograph was given to Trottier, and the stamp design was made form that.

This is an example of a living Canadian being shown on a stamp, contrary to the law that no one living except royalty could be shown.

Further, it developed through the years that a Canadian must be dead 10 years to be pictured on a stamp, with the exception of Governors - General and Prime Ministers.

There are exceptions to that rule, too.

Canada issued a 7 (stamp on Oct. 20, 1971, (558) to note the first anniversary of the murder of Quebec's provincial cabinet minister Pierre Laporte by independence terrorists. It also marked what would have been Laporte's 50th birthday. Macabre, but politically expedient.

A 34 stamp (1094) was issued May 9, 1986, to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Canadian military postal service, which no longer exists.

The main design shows a group of Canadian soldiers sorting mail during the Northwest Europe campaign of World War II. Superimposed is an army post office cancel from 1944.

One of those shown on the stamp is Jean Ste. Marie of Longueuil. It took him two years to come forward, but when he did, he provided an original of the photograph used for the stamp design.

By the way, the photograph was taken in 1945, the 1944 postmark notwithstanding. Ste. Marie, warrant officer at the time is pictured in the center of the stamp.

Living Canadians may soon be shown on Canadian stamps on purpose.

Canada Post is one of the sponsors of a nationwide photograph contest in conjunction with Canada's 125th anniversary. The photographs are to show Canadians at home, at work and at play.

Canada post is planning to send four of the best entries to its Stamp Advisory Committee for a possible stamps issue.

It seems that breaking tradition that concerns stamp collectors and perhaps others too is called innovation by Canada Post. Most of us call it commercialization.

I wonder if the logos of Canada post and the other sponsors will be included on the selvage of the stamps, if they actually are issued.

FISCALS OF THE NATIVE STATES

Many modern states collect public funds such as taxes, fees and licences through stamps. Stamps are also used in the acquittances for payments made out of public funds. Most of these are governed by the law of the land and are fixed by suitable enactments. Money is also collected through embossed stamp papers, non-judicial, judicial and court fees. In all these varieties of transactions or official business, the stamps, labels, or stamped papers do not have any postal use as in the case of the ordinary postage stamp.

CHAMPION OF LIBERTY SUBJECT GOES HOME

Ignace Jan Paderewski the subject of a United States Champion of Liberty stamp, is in the news again. At least his remains have recently been a fit subject for the evening news, due to their now completed relocation to a final resting place in St. John's Cathedral in Warsaw, Poland.

In late June, Paderewski's brown cedar coffin was disinterred from its temporary resting place of 50 years in the Arlington National Cemetery. It lay in state at Fort Meyer Chapel, and was then flown to Poland.

U.S. stamp collectors will recall the Polish pianist and patriot from his appearance on the 4¢ and 8¢ Champions of Liberty issue of 1960.

Paderewski more than justified the honor. He began his professional life as a concert pianist in 1889. And he was marvelous, a genuine talent whose work attracted and held the attention of crowds. But the totality of his talents went well beyond music, as reflected in the words of French composer Camille Saint-Saens: He was 'a genius who happens to play the piano'

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Paderewski was devoted to the cause of freedom for the land of his birth. It was a passion equal to his music. He managed to attract the attention of President Woodrow Wilson during his U.S. concert tours, and was instrumental in convincing Wilson to include the creation of a free and independent Poland as one of his "14 points" for the achievement of a lasting post World War I European peace.

When Poland was reborn in 1918, Paderewski became its principal unifying force and served as its first Prime Minister. As such, he signed the Treaty of Versailles, ending the war.

But Paderewski wasn't just a talker. The millions he earned before and after World War I were substantially given away in war relief to Polish refugees or donated to projects in his native land.

When Germany invaded, in 1939, the Polish government in exile called upon Paderewski, and he became its Prime Minister as a means of giving it rapid and unquestioned standing.

Once the government in exile was established, Paderewski returned to the United States, at age 79, to await the course of the war. He died in New York in June 1941. President Franklin Roosevelt offered interment at Arlington "until Poland shall be free".

It has taken 50 years for that vision to be realized, but Paderewski's journey home, now that it was possible, was not without controversy.

Following his sister's wish Paderewski's heart had been removed after his death, and is in a crypt at the Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa in Doylestown, Pa.

Legal efforts were undertaken (unsuccessfully) in New York to retrieve the heart to send back with the body.

Another unsuccessful legal proceeding, brought by a self-described fan in Alexandria, Va., attempted to have Paderewski's removal to Poland halted in favour of a family vault Paderewski had purchased for his wife and sons in France.

Finally, Paul Hume, a Washington, D.C. music critic and a biographer of Paderewski, refused an invitation to serve as an honorary pall bearer at the final Arlington ceremony, to protest a eulogy given by Vice President Dan Quayle.

Hume, who had originally been asked to give the eulogy, said Quayle "wouldn't know Paderewski's music or history if it flew up and bit him on the neck"

Despite these impediments the transfer has taken place and we can all hope the Paderewski and his new resting place enjoy for all time the peace he worked for, and which won him recognition as a Champion of Liberty.

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