

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Public DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No.

580

Press

~~Mis.~~

Dated

22-5-1867

Not to be folded or roughly handled

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department,
22nd May 1867.*

No. 157. Read the following letter from the Secretary to the Government of India, to the Officiating Director General of Telegraphs in India; dated Simla, 7th May 1867, No. 43.

Home Department.
Electric Telegraph.

I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, No. 4968, dated the 28th December, on the subject of the free transmission of certain classes of messages by the telegraph, and in reply to communicate the following remarks and orders :—

2. The Governor General in Council fully recognizes the necessity of providing that the Telegraph lines shall not be needlessly encumbered with free messages, almost all of which, as observed by you, carry the privilege of precedence over other messages.

3. The increase of late years in the traffic of the Telegraph gives rise to an inconvenience, in respect of the privileged transmission of free messages which did not before exist, and in the interest of the public who pay for their messages, it is clearly necessary that the Government should seek to restrict the free privileged use of the telegraph to cases of undoubted public expediency.

4. The large estimated value (Rupees 3,10,123) which you have put upon the service done by the Telegraph in the transmission of free messages, may perhaps give rise to a rather exaggerated idea of the extent to which the conveying power of the telegraph is occupied by such messages, for the heaviest item (Rupees 2,71,872) in the account is for Public News and Mail Steamer Reports, which, for the most part, are circulated to *all* Telegraph Offices, a charge of Rupees 1-8-0 being included on account of every station-copy made out at an intermediate Office through which a message passes; and station-copies, although they occupy the time of the Office Establishment, do not of course add to the occupation of the wires. But, even allowing for this fact, the Governor General in Council quite admits that the figures given by you show a much larger occupation of the lines by the transmission of free messages than was supposed to be the case: and the result is useful, not only as demonstrating the need of caution in dealing with future proposals for the extension of the system, but as showing the necessity of now examining the existing list of free messages with a view to curtailing it, and so reducing the evil to which so large an occupation of the Telegraph wires has given rise.

5. The first eight items in the list attached to your letter include the commercial messages sent twice a month from the Chamber of Commerce at Hong-Kong, through Galle, to the Chambers of Commerce at Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, as well as the commercial messages interchanged weekly by the Chambers of Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, and the similar messages sent weekly from Bombay to Kurrachee. The total annual number of these messages is 388, and the estimated charge is Rupees 9486. The Governor General in Council does not think that any curtailment can properly be made in respect of the messages above referred to.

6. The next item (No. 9) is the commercial message authorized to be sent by the Calcutta Chamber to Reuter's Agent at Bombay twice a month, in view to the transmission of the intelligence by the Homeward Mail Steamers. Having regard to the altered circumstances of telegraphic communication between India

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and England, it is hardly possible that the original object of this privilege can now be of any importance: and the Governor General in Council accordingly authorizes you to discontinue the free transmission of the messages in question, after communication, if necessary, with the Chamber of Commerce.

7. The next two items (Nos. 10 and 11) in the list refer to the bulletins of Public News compiled in the Telegraph Office at Galle from the China and Australian Newspapers on the arrival of the China and Australian Mail Steamers, and telegraphed thence to *all* stations in India. The enormous extent to which this custom occupies the telegraph wires, is evident from a consideration of the fact that three times* in each month a tolerably long message is made to pass over every telegraph line throughout India. The value of this service, at the ordinary tariff rates of charge, is estimated at Rupees 53,760 per annum. The Governor General in Council does not doubt that there is some public advantage in this arrangement, but he feels sure that whatever the advantage may be, it must be much more than counterbalanced by the interruption thereby caused to the prompt transmission of paid messages. That private paid messages should be delayed while Public News bulletins of the kind under notice are transmitted under the precedence signal over every telegraph line in India, is of itself so obviously inexpedient that the Governor General in Council cannot conceive any reasonable objection to the abolition or curtailment of the privileged transmission of such messages. His Excellency in Council accordingly desires me to say that, after three months from the date of this order, the Public News bulletins above referred to should be transmitted only to the Presidency Towns of Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay.

8. The next three items (Nos. 12, 13 and 14) in the list refer to the reports sent by telegraph to *all* stations in India of the arrivals and departures of the European and Colonial Mail Steamers at and from the Ports of Madras, Bombay, and Galle. Messages numbering 552 annually and representing a value, at the ordinary tariff rates, of Rupees 1,54,560, are thus made to pass over every telegraph line in India, involving a corresponding obstruction to the transit of other paid messages. The Governor General in Council considers that it will be sufficient if the reports relating to the arrival and departure of the *English* Mail Steamers at and from *Bombay* be continued as heretofore, the other reports being sent only to Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, and Galle. The change will have effect three months hence.

9. It seems desirable also that the reports now telegraphed at the charge of the Post Office Department, regarding the progress of the Overland Mails on the main lines of communication, should be treated as free messages and made public at the various Telegraph Offices at which they are received—copies of the public messages being sent to the postal and other Offices now receiving them.

10. The next item (No. 15) in the list refers to the reports of the arrival at, and departure from, Pondicherry, of the Steamers of the Messageries Imperiales. It appears that, without any formal authority, the Telegraph Department has been in the habit of sending these reports free to all stations in India at an estimated annual charge of Rupees 13,440. The Steamers of the Messageries Imperiales

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will, under the orders given in the preceding paragraph, be reported at Madras and Galle, and nothing more seems necessary; but the existing practice may continue unchanged for the next three months.

11. The next item (No. 16) has reference to the reports of the movements of the local Mail Steamers of the British India Steam Navigation Company under contract with the Government of India. The arrival at and departure from each coasting station are now telegraphed free to every other coasting station—the total number of reports annually circulated on this account being no less than 4176, involving an estimated charge of Rupees 50,112. This elaborate system of reporting is certainly not required for the information of the public or Government, and the Calcutta Agents of the Company have stated that it is not necessary for the regular working of the contract. The Agents have proposed the substitution of the following limited list of reports to be made, *viz.* :—

CALCUTTA AND BOMBAY LINE.

<i>Bombay</i>	Arrivals at Bombay to be reported to Calcutta. Departures from Bombay to be reported to Cochin, Galle, and Calcutta.
<i>Cochin</i>	Departures from Cochin to be reported to Bombay or Galle, according to the direction in which the Steamer is proceeding.
<i>Galle</i>	Departures from Galle to be reported to Cochin or Madras and Calcutta, according to the direction in which the Steamer is proceeding.
<i>Madras</i>	Departures from Madras to be reported to Galle or Calcutta, according to the direction in which the Steamer is proceeding.

CALCUTTA AND BURMAH LINES.

<i>Rangoon</i>	Arrivals and departures to be reported to Calcutta. Departures from Rangoon and other coasting stations to be reported to the next station in advance.
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MADRAS AND RANGOON LINE.

<i>Rangoon</i>	Arrivals and departures to be reported to Madras.
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The Governor General in Council sees no objection to these proposals, and sanctions their adoption, after the lapse of three months, in supersession of the existing arrangements. The Agents have stated, in respect of the coasting Steamers between Bombay and Calcutta, that departures are always telegraphed by them to the next station in advance, and that the information so sent may be made public at the Telegraph Offices where it is received.

12. The next item (No. 17) has reference to Weather Reports sent (some twice a day and others once a day) by Meteorological Observers at eleven stations in India, to the Meteorological Committee, Calcutta. The total number of messages so sent in the year is 5475, and the estimated value is Rupees 13,681. You have proposed that the reports now sent twice daily should be reduced to once a day with the proviso that, in cases of exceptional weather, special reports may be made at more frequent intervals. The Governor General in Council would wish you to place yourself in communication with the Meteorological Committee, and arrange with them in respect of the reduction which has been proposed, or any other reduction which they may consider feasible without prejudice to the objects for which the Committee has been organized.

13. The next item (No. 18) relates to bi-weekly Weather Reports sent by Telegraph Officers from 27 different stations in India to Calcutta for publication in the *Telegraph Gazette*. The annual number of these messages is 2808, and the

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estimated annual value, Rupees 9828. It seems to the Governor General in Council that the Meteorological Committee will be best able to say how far it is desirable to continue these reports which were commenced long before the organization of the Committee, and may not improbably be now almost useless in view of the more exact observations made and reported to the Committee. You are authorized, therefore, to place yourself in communication with the Committee on this subject, and to arrange with them for the continuance or otherwise of these reports.

14. The next item (No. 19) has reference to the Daily Reports respecting the height of the River Ganges sent to Calcutta for publication in the *Telegraph Gazette* from Benares, Mirzapore, and Futtelghur, and to the similar reports from Fyzabad in regard to the height of the River Gogra. The annual number of these messages is 1460, and the estimated value, Rupees 3650. The Governor General in Council thinks that these reports may properly be allowed to remain on the present footing.

15. The last item (No. 20) relates to the reports sent by the Telegraph Master at Saugor Island, to the Governments of Madras and Ceylon, notifying the departure of the Calcutta Mail Steamers. The Governments of Madras and Ceylon will be asked whether there is any necessity for the continuance of these reports.

No. 44.

Copy forwarded to the Government of Madras, with a request that the Government of India may be informed as to the necessity or otherwise of the continued transmission of the telegrams mentioned in the last paragraph.

(Signed) E. C. BAYLEY,
Secy. to the Govt. of India.

No. 158. To the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, Simla, dated Fort Saint George, 22nd May 1867, No. 580.

In acknowledging the receipt of your docket, forwarding copy of a letter addressed to the Officiating Director General of Telegraphs in India, under date the 7th instant, I am directed to inform you that the reports sent by the Telegraph Master at Saugor Island to the Government of Madras, notifying the departure of the Calcutta Mail Steamer, are of great convenience to the public, and that the Governor in Council would regret to see them discontinued.

(Signed) A. J. ARBUTHNOT,
Chief Secretary.

Public Department.

No. 580.

To

The Secretary to the Government
of India,

Home Department.

Simla

Sir,

In acknowledging the receipt of your docket forwarding copy of a letter addressed to the Officiating Director General of Telegraphs in India under date the 7th instant I am directed to inform you that the reports sent to Madras by the Telegraph Master at Saugor Island to the Government of Madras notifying the departure of the Calcutta Mail Steamer are of great convenience to the public and that the Governor in Council would regret to see them discontinued.

*Fort St. George
22 May 1867*

by

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No. 1167 Sephath

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dated 22nd May 1867.

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