Role of Postal Services in Indian Subcontinent in the Current Epidemic
A Discussion Based Notional Study in Punjab and Haryana Circle Headquarters

Dr. G. S. Bhalla*
Dr. Prajakta Pradip Shukla**
Dr. Rohit Kanda***

Abstract

A virtual diary log based study from CPMG Ambala, SSPO Ambala, DAP Ambala and CPMG Chandigarh, have been taken. Observation at the above stations have supplemented to the study. Study have been taken using following 6 key indicators, namely, Medical Facilities, Cleanliness, Preparedness, Precaution and Protection, General Remarks on Sanitization and Greenery, and Efficiency of Operations and Operationalization. In such hard times, department of posts is actively releasing its important role in the crucial execution of the day to day affairs of the nation. Apt facilities at Both CPMG Ambala and Chandigarh have been observed. Cleanliness is an all observed phenomenon. Apt preparedness, precaution and protection at Both CPMG Ambala and Chandigarh have been observed. Mask usage was not observed as such at CPMG Chandigarh. Sanitization and Ecological Balance was an all observed phenomenon.

Keywords COVID-19 Pandemic, Postal Services, India Post, North-Western India. **JEL Classification:** C93, D22, D62, D78, E21, F01, F59, F64, G18, G21, H23, H53, H84.

Introduction

Our nature mother is very kind to humanity, still a balancing force of this universe. It repents from the community what it's owes up. See the recent situation, where across globe it is visible that the mother earth is healing itself. Thousands of animal and bird species are coming back to the surroundings they had left decades ago, or even a century ago, whether it be the dolphins in Marine Drive or Thames, or the deer's walk in Calgary or California.

The COVID-19, popularly pronounced as the Novel Corona Virus, is a recent vastly spreading epidemic, having affected the whole globe, with its far reaching disastrous impact. US is on the notch with having around 4 lakh positive cases. In India, Mumbai is the single city having highest number of cases, even more than a few states, emerging as the center of epidemic on the lines of New York.

Indian Postal Services is one of the largest postal network in the world having 1,55,531 post offices all over the country. Initially India Post having 23,344 post offices prior to independence, serving to needs of 15,038 persons and covering 53 square miles area per post office, have grown up to present 1,55,531 post offices, out of which 1,39,882 i.e. 89.94% are in rural areas and 15,649 i.e. 10.06% are in urban areas having 1,81,477 Departmental and 2,37,341 Gramin Dak Sewak as on 30.03.2018, serving 8,770 people in average, i.e. 6455 in rural and 29,458 in urban area covering an area of 21.14 sq. kms per post office. The first post office in India was established by East India Company in the year 1688 in Bombay followed by Calcutta and Madras. It was named as "Company Mail". The Post Office Department of the East India Company was first established on March 31, 1774 at Calcutta, followed in 1778 at Madras and in 1792 at Bombay. The present type of post office came in to being in the year 1854 under the post office Act of 1854. The Indian post office has a huge network of branches with an unique outreach in rural areas. In the year 1861, total number of post offices in India was 889. The number of post offices in India increase from 23,344 in 1947 to 1, 55,531 as on 31-03-2018 (Department of Posts, 2019).

In the current situation of pandemic, where department of posts, along with department of telecommunication is serving as the fourth leg of the

* Dean, Faculty of Economics & Business, Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar (India). Email: hellodrbhalla@gmail.com

** Faculty Associate, Lal Bahadur Shashtri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie (India). Email: prachi.jnu@gmail.com

*** UGC Funded Research Fellow, University School of Financial Studies, Guru Nanak Dev University / Assoc. Professor (OB, Finance & Research Analytics), Indus School of Business Management, KES (India / Dubai / UK). Email: rohit.kanda@iiuedu.in

administrative chair of the country, after the administration, security and medicine, providing its role in official communication and articles' flow in the country. In such hard times, department of posts is actively releasing its important role in the crucial execution of the day to day affairs of the nation. The present study is a discussion based summation, depicting the role of postal services in the current epidemic, based on the views given by different officials in Punjab and Haryana Circle Headquarters. A virtual diary log based study from CPMG Ambala, SSPO Ambala, DAP Ambala and CPMG Chandigarh, have been taken.

As the issue of COVID-19 is a recent one, with a study on postal services already a lesser taken topic in India and abroad, we didn't found a study of the kind truly relevant to review. Hence, being only a research paper, indirectly attached studies are not included as review.

Methodology

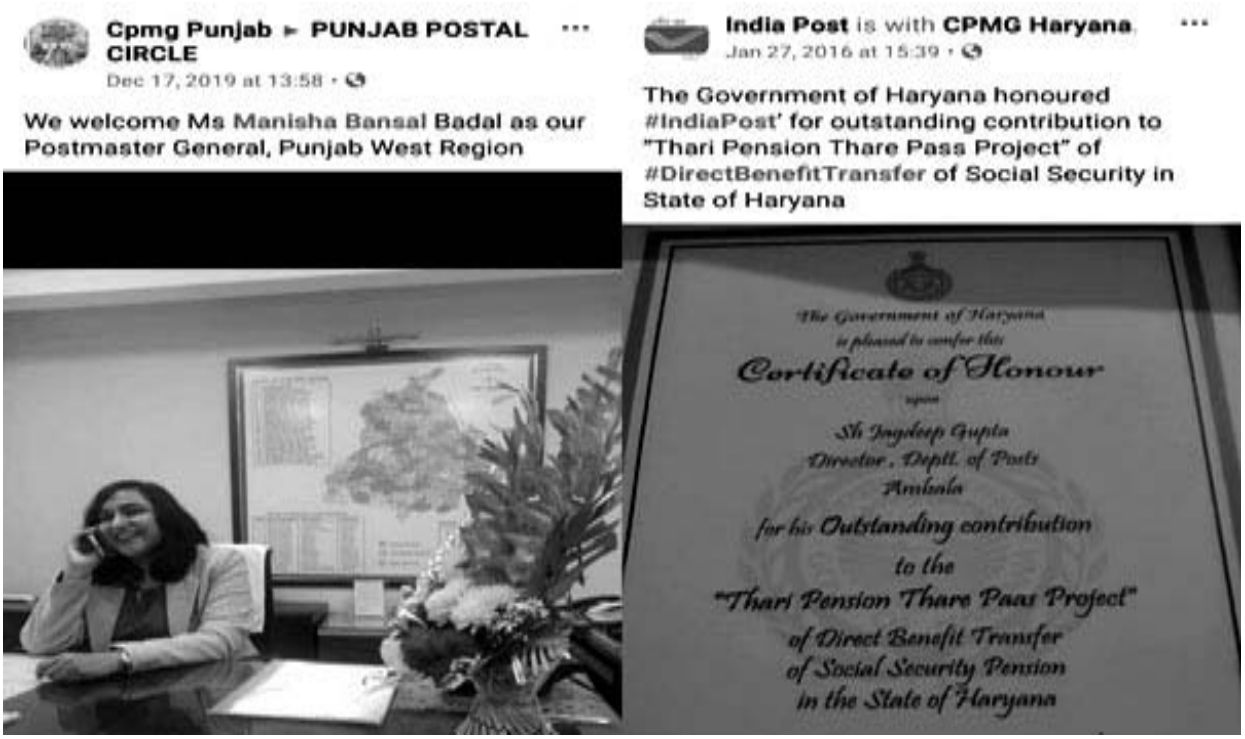
Observations and views of India Post Officials were taken from key centers of earmarked north-western region of India, namely, Chandigarh, Amritsar / Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Ambala, Delhi, Shimla / Dharamsala Head Post Offices. CPMG Haryana Circle Key Officials have been met and made aware of the grant of permission and conduct of research, during my visit at CPMG Ambala for Initial Feild Induction. SSPO Ambala having visited for Pilot Survey was also taken in the study. CPMG Chandigarh officials were met to know the status. Discussion based role of postal services in the current epidemic, based on the views given by different officials in Punjab and Haryana Circle Headquarters (CPMG Ambala, SSPO Ambala, DAP Ambala, Ambala Cantt Head Post Office, India Post Payment Bank Ambala Cantt., India Post Payment Bank Chandigarh and CPMG Chandigarh) has been, hence, taken under consideration. Observation at the above stations have supplemented to the study.

Figure 1. Researchers' visits and observations in the field



Study have been taken using following 6 key indicators: 1. Medical Facilities, 2. Overall Cleanliness Mark, 3. Preparedness to the Challenge, 4. Precaution and Protection taken up, 5. General Remarks on Sanitization and Greenery, and 6. Efficiency of Operations and Operationalization. Ecological Momentary Assessment (EMA) Methodology of Data Collection is applied, using Elicitation and Feedback studies for the purpose. Other Virtual Resources have been referred.

Figure 2. Observation from online sources



Results and Discussion

AD (BD&T) at CPMG Ambala assures, "Delivery of Masks to each and every employee, and access to hand sanitizers is our core focus, in addition to taking all the available precautionary and necessary measures at the places under the Circle". AD (Grievances) at CPMG Chandigarh comments, "As per the government orders, we are assuring frequent cleaning of whole premises. Access to hand sanitizer at each entry point and key offices is being stressed out".

1. Medical Facilities: Apt medical facilities at Both CPMG Ambala and Chandigarh have been observed. DAP Ambala Main Office, having settled within the CPMG Ambala Complex, is mutually receiving all those medical facilities upto mark. SSPO Ambala is again observed equipped with adequate amenities for its first aid requirements. Head Post Office Ambala Cantt is observed adequately equipped with all resources and facilities, having apt medical first aid and amenities. India Post Payment Bank Ambala Cantt, having settled within the HO Ambala Cantt Complex, is mutually receiving all those medical facilities upto mark. India Post Payment Bank Chandigarh, having settled within the CPMG Chandigarh Complex, is mutually receiving all those medical facilities upto mark.
2. Cleanliness: Cleanliness is all observed phenomenon, hence is deemed upto mark in the existing situation. Apt measures for the maintenance of cleanliness is there at all the stations observed, including CPMG Ambala, DAP Ambala Main Office, SSPO Ambala, Head Post Office Ambala Cantt, India Post Payment Bank Ambala Cantt, India Post Payment Bank Chandigarh and CPMG Chandigarh Complex. Having lesser external interaction, DAP Ambala sub office has marginal cleanliness observed. ASD to SSPO Ambala comments, "Fighting to the epidemic is our most sought after goal. We try to ensure our best possible efforts to ensure safety and cleanliness".
3. Preparedness: Apt preparedness at Both CPMG Ambala and Chandigarh has been observed. DAP Ambala Main Office, having settled within the CPMG Ambala Complex, is mutually following all those preparedness upto mark. SSPO Ambala is again observed equipped with adequate amenities for its preparedness. Head Post Office Ambala Cantt is observed adequately equipped with all resources and facilities, having apt preparedness. India Post Payment Bank Ambala Cantt, having settled within the HO Ambala Cantt Complex, is mutually equipped with all those preparedness. ASD to SSPO Ambala adds, "If we are successfully able to tackle the disease spread in our premises, only then we will be able to serve the nation in such hard time". Having lesser external interaction, DAP Ambala sub office has lesser preparedness observed. India

Post Payment Bank Chandigarh, having settled within the CPMG Chandigarh Complex, is mutually equipped with all those preparedness upto mark. Mask usage was not observed as such at CPMG Chandigarh and IPPB Chandigarh Premises.

4. Precaution and Protection: Apt precaution and protection at Both CPMG Ambala and Chandigarh have been observed. DAP Ambala Main Office, having settled within the CPMG Ambala Complex, is mutually following all those precaution and protection upto mark. SSPO Ambala is again observed equipped with adequate amenities for its precaution and protection. Head Post Office Ambala Cantt is observed adequately equipped with all resources and facilities, having apt precaution and protection. India Post Payment Bank Ambala Cantt, having settled within the HO Ambala Cantt Complex, is mutually following all those precaution and protection. AO (BD&T) adds, "Delivery of masks and hand sanitizers is our core priority. All staff members are being motivated to get and use them". India Post Payment Bank Chandigarh, having settled within the CPMG Chandigarh Complex, is mutually following all those precaution and protection up to mark. Having lesser external interaction, DAP Ambala sub office has lesser no. of precaution observed. Protective measures abeyance is also observed as such.
5. General Remarks on Sanitization and Ecological Balancing: Sanitization and Ecological Balance was an all observed phenomenon, hence is deemed upto mark in the existing situation. Apt measures for the maintenance of cleanliness are there at all the stations observed, including CPMG Ambala, DAP Ambala Main Office, SSPO Ambala, Head Post Office Ambala Cantt, India Post Payment Bank Ambala Cantt, India Post Payment Bank Chandigarh and CPMG Chandigarh Complex. Having lesser external interaction, DAP Ambala sub office has marginal sanitization observed. The place score well on th greenery front, having good contributions made by the staff. ASD to SSPO Ambala comments, "Fighting to the epidemic is our most sought after goal. We try to ensure our best possible efforts to ensure safety and cleanliness". The Head Post Office at Gurgaon, during the Initial Feild Screening has not observed upto mark on the cleanliness, sanitization and green cover parameters. The picture was a bit better, but still weak in case of Head Post Offices at Ludhiana, Jalandhar and Kapurthala.
6. Efficiency of Operations and Operationalization: India Post is running through the length and breadth at every stretch using its different initiatives. For example, SPO Una is providing mobile post office van in its division, especially designed for the current hard situation. Already, Dak Sevaks are providing many services at home to needy, especially; DBT scheme of central / state government, even in far flung hilly and / or encroached pockets. PMG Chandigarh, ADBD and DPS, under CPMG Chandigarh are assuring every effort to assure facilitation to the needy condemn. CPMG Haryana and it's DAP, SSPO offices were working hard since inception with its different initiatives, to assure best services to the community in the region and are regularly planning towards the release of facilitation activity, in terms of financial allocation (DBT), to best address the current need of hour, of locale in the region, to minimize the inconvenience to the community.

Overall, the offices observed have assessed efficiently working in the current hard situation. Better prevention at some of the offices observed deficient is advised, to tackle the epidemic as well.

Summation and New Directions

In the current situation of pandemic, where department of posts, along with department of telecommunication is serving as the fourth leg of the administrative chair of the country, after the administration, security and medicine, providing its role in official communication and articles' flow in the country. In such hard times, department of posts is actively releasing its execution in the day to day affairs of the nation. Apt facilities at Both CPMG Ambala and Chandigarh have been observed. Cleanliness is an all observed phenomenon. Apt preparedness, precaution and protection at Both CPMG Ambala and Chandigarh have been observed. Mask usage was not observed as such at CPMG Chandigarh. Sanitization and Ecological Balance was an all observed phenomenon. The department presents a good image.

Acknowledgement

My humble thanks to the authorities and officials, for their due help in conduct of this micro study, using different virtual methods, in such a hard situation. My due thanks to the officials and authorities, including our Honourable Dean and Head of Department, to provide remote access with all research tools and resources, in such a succinct period. My Due Thanks to the Chief Postmaster General at the Ambala and Chandigarh respective circle headquarters, to duly granting the written / oral permission for the grant of conduct of research work in the circle, including this micro assessment in Punjab and Haryana Postal Circles. - Rohit Kanda.

References and Bibliography

Authors duly acknowledges to the referred and overlooked Books, Journals, Reports and Websites of relevance, including "The economics of a pandemic: the case of Covid-19" by Paolo Surico and Andrea Galeotti, under London Business School, European Research Council and Wheeler Institute for Business and Development at University of London, U.K. In addition, the contents referred from the respective annual reports of India Post, up to the year are also acknowledged, as issued by Department of Posts, Government of India.

Figure 3. Reference Clicks of the Offices visited

