Design Resource
Central Telegram Office of Mumbai
Discontinuance of Telegram Message
by
Palash Vaswani
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:
https://dsource.in/resource/central-telegram-office-mumbai

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Introduction

It can be said that the history of Indian telecom started with the introduction of telegram in India. The first experimental electric telegraph line was wired between Calcutta and Diamond Harbour in 1850. Then in 1851, the telegraph department became a small part of Public Works Department as its use was opened up for the British East India Company. Then started the construction of 6,400Km of telegraph lines connecting Kolkata, Peshawar, Mumbai, Chennai, Ootacamund and Bangalore. William O'Shaughnessy, who mastered the telegram and telephone in India, belonged to the Public Works Department, and worked towards the development of telecom throughout this period. A separate department was formed in 1854 when telegram facilities were opened for the public. A picturesque 19th Century building in Mumbai, which is now known as Central Telegram Office, came into existence in 1872. After serving the country and its people for almost 140 years, the telegram office and its service worldwide have been shut down permanently on the 15th July 2013.

Central Telegram Office, Mumbai.

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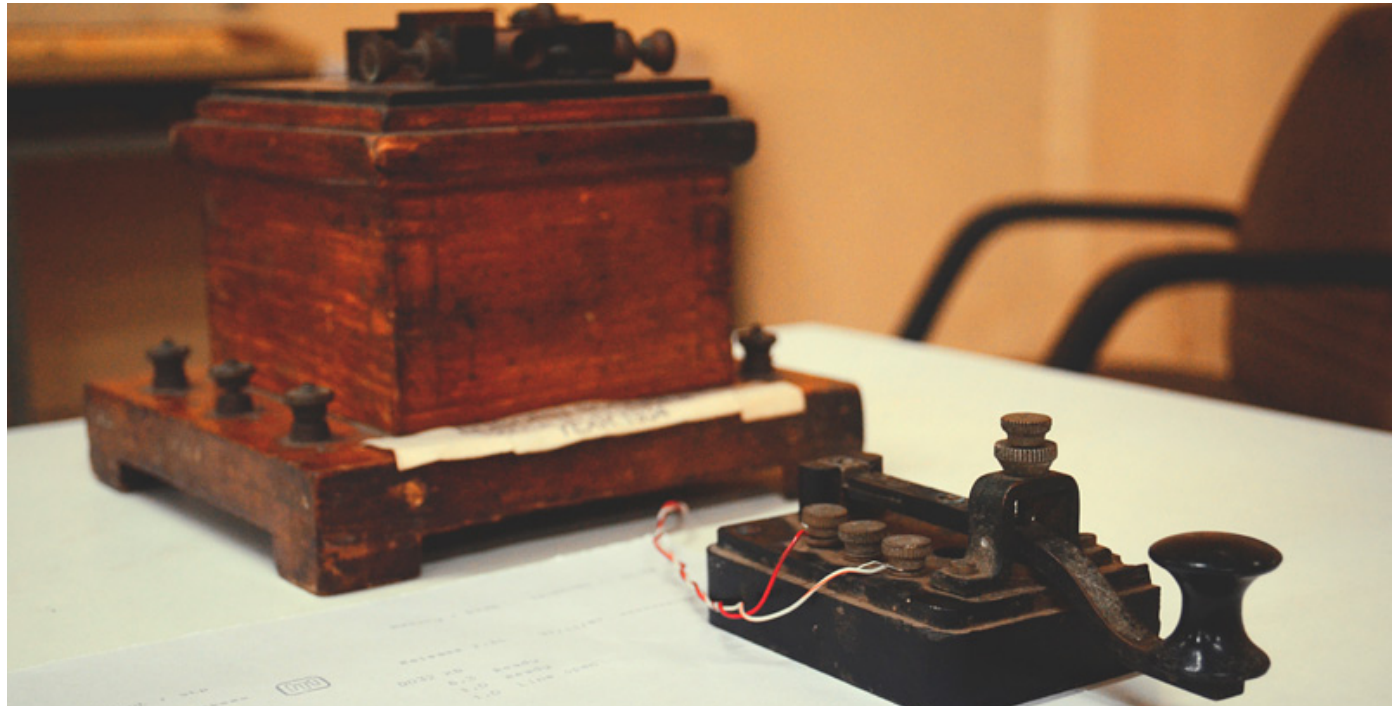https://dsource.in/resource/central-telegram-office-mumbai/introduction

A view from the Telegram Office.

Central Telegraph Office, Mumbai.

Morse code telegram system.

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Place

The beautifully crafted neo-gothic building of Central Telegram Office was erected from the designs of 2 master architects - J. Trubshawe and W. Paris. The construction of the building was commenced on 11th of April 1869 by the Government of India and was completed on 1st of December 1872. The total cost of the making of this marvelous structure was approximately 6 Lac Rupees at that time. It was Bombay's General Post Office (G.P.O.) until 1913, when it officially became the Central telegram Office and the G.P.O. was transferred to the existing structure near Victoria Terminus. In recent years, the momentous building underwent a successful restoration IIT to bring it to its former glory. The Central Telegraph Office is located on Veer Nariman Road by the Flora Fountain circle in the Fort, Mumbai.

A view from the Telegram Office.

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Flora Fountain, Mumbai.

Central Telegraph Office behind the Flora Fountain.

Flora Fountain, Mumbai.

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Common Man installation in Fort.

Central Telegraph Office, Mumbai.

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Beautiful Architecture of the building.

Beautiful Architecture of the building.

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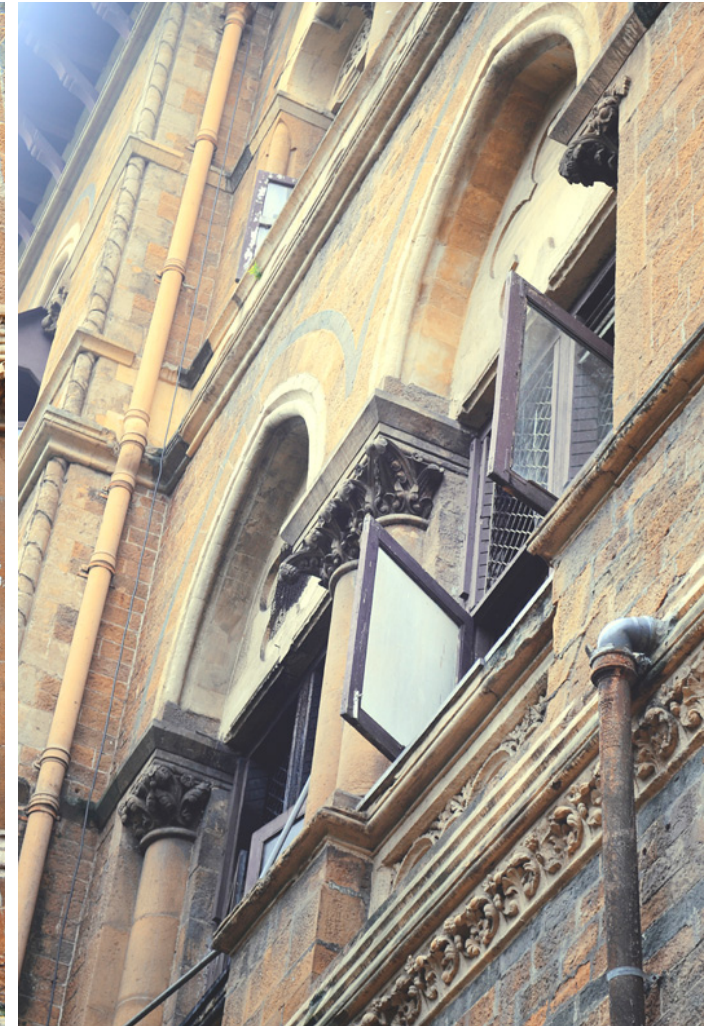https://dsource.in/resource/central-telegram-office-mumbai/place

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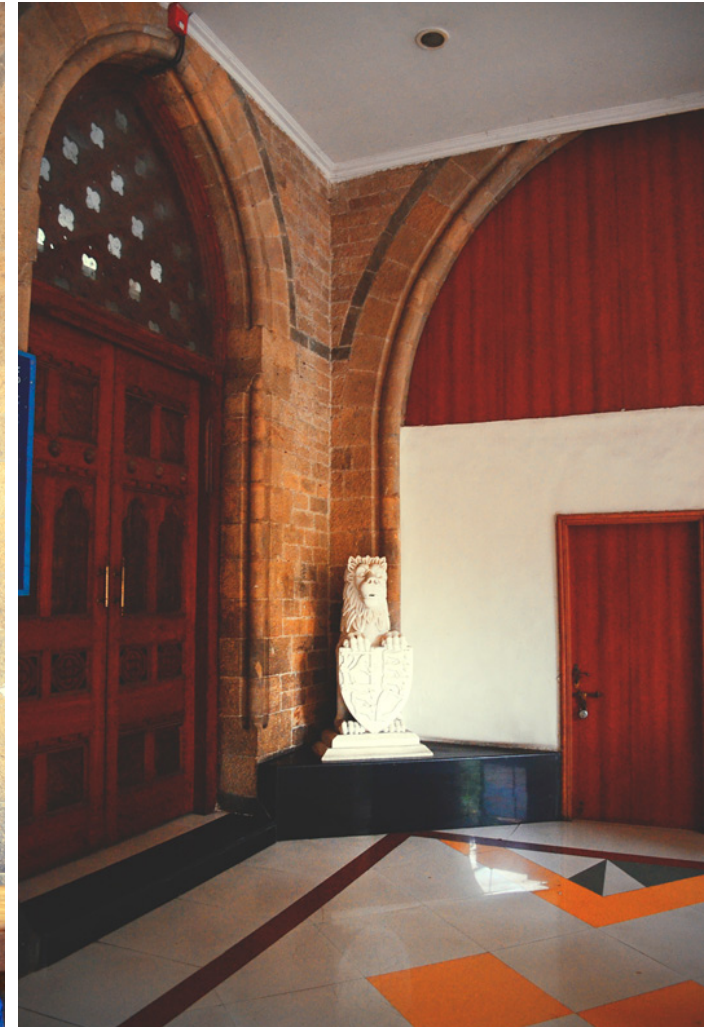by
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BSNL office in the same premise.

Inside the office.

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British era lift is still used by the office.

British era lift is still used by the office.

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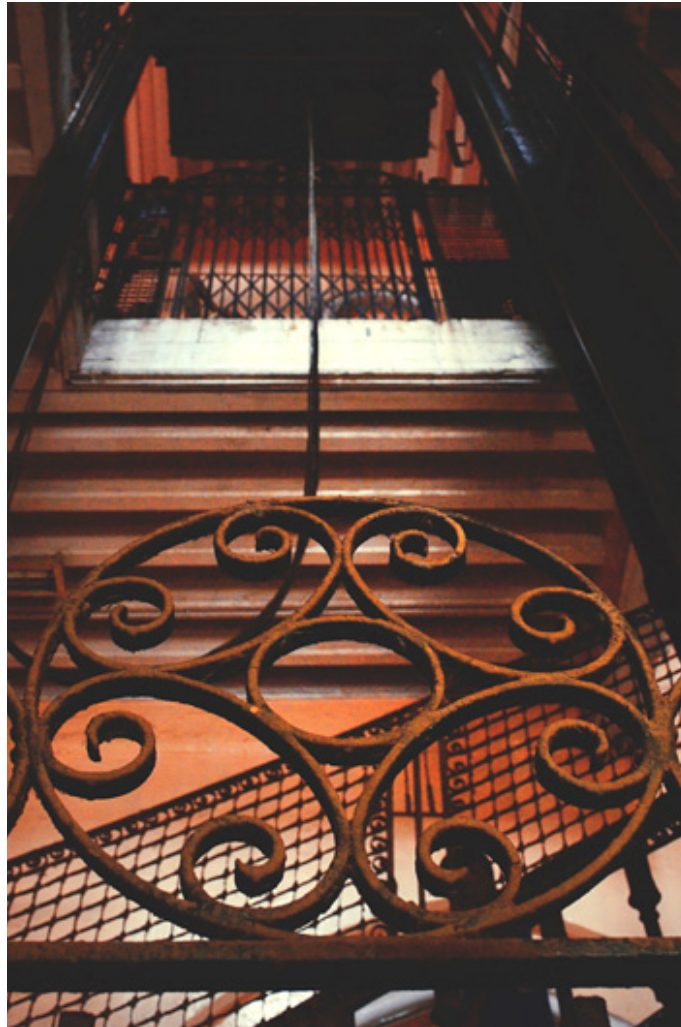## Central Telegram Office of Mumbai
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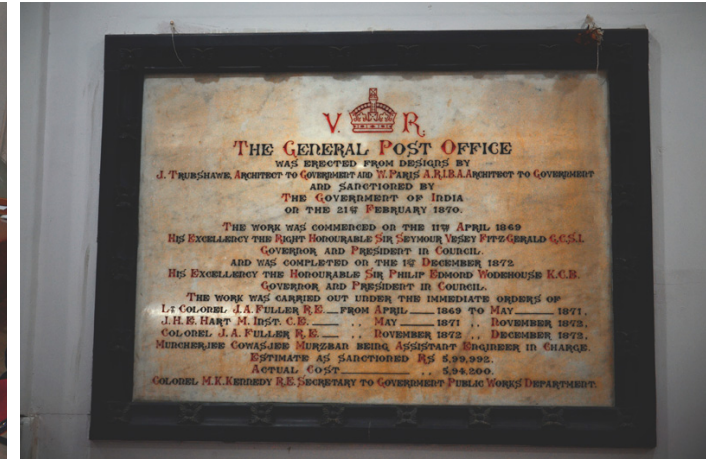
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A person booking a telegram.

Details on the display.

Telegram dispatch hall.

Telegram dispatch hall.

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Telegram dispatch hall.

Canteen.

File room.

Inside the telegram office.

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Employee union office.

Employee union office.

Library.

Inside the telegram office.

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Inside the telegram office.

Inside the telegram office.

Articles in the news paper on display.

Letter from employee union.

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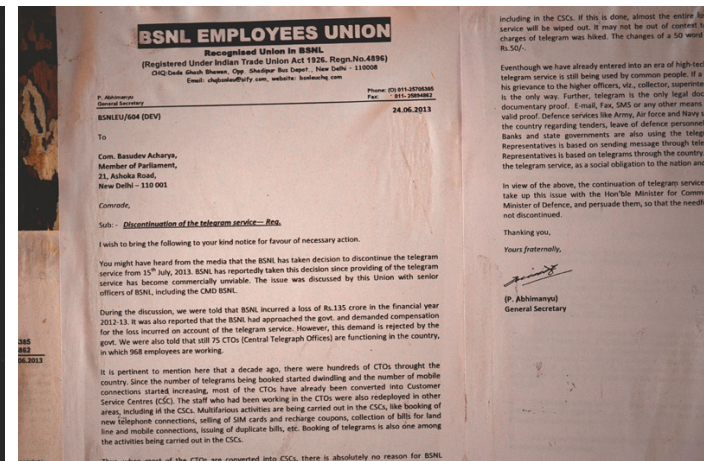https://dsource.in/resource/central-telegram-office-mumbai/place

Articles in the news paper on display.

Mr. R.S. Renuse and Mr. G.T. Desai with a poster on discontinuation of telegram.

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A heartfelt message on the poster.

Calling for a strike by the employee union.

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People

Mr. G.T. Desai joined the telegram office in 1975. It has been 41 years of his service and now he works as Senior Telegraph Master. Almost close to his retirement, his love for his work can be felt when he talks about the time he has spent in the office. An expert in Morse code, his work also included intercepting message from weather department, ships on the coast, updates from press, army etc. He believes that the telegram is still important as it is considered to be the official document, and is sad about the office getting closed on the 15th of July.

Mr. R.S. Renuse works as a Senior S.S.O and it's been 40 years of his service in the office. In 1973, he joined as a telegram messenger and believes that whatever he is today is because of the telegram. He recalls his time when many senior Bollywood actors used to stand in queue to post a message. A full society used to come to standstill when he delivered the telegram, as the message used to hold a great value and importance in that era. He still can't believe that service has been shut down and is extremely sad about it.

Mr. M. P. Kachre is working as Senior Telegram Master (Operating) and it's been 33 years since he joined the office. He remembers all the city codes by heart.

Mr. G.T. Desai, Senior Telegraph Master.

Mr. G.T. Desai in the dispatch room.

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Mr. G.T. Desai, Senior Telegraph Master.

Mr. R.S. Renuse, Senior S.S.O.

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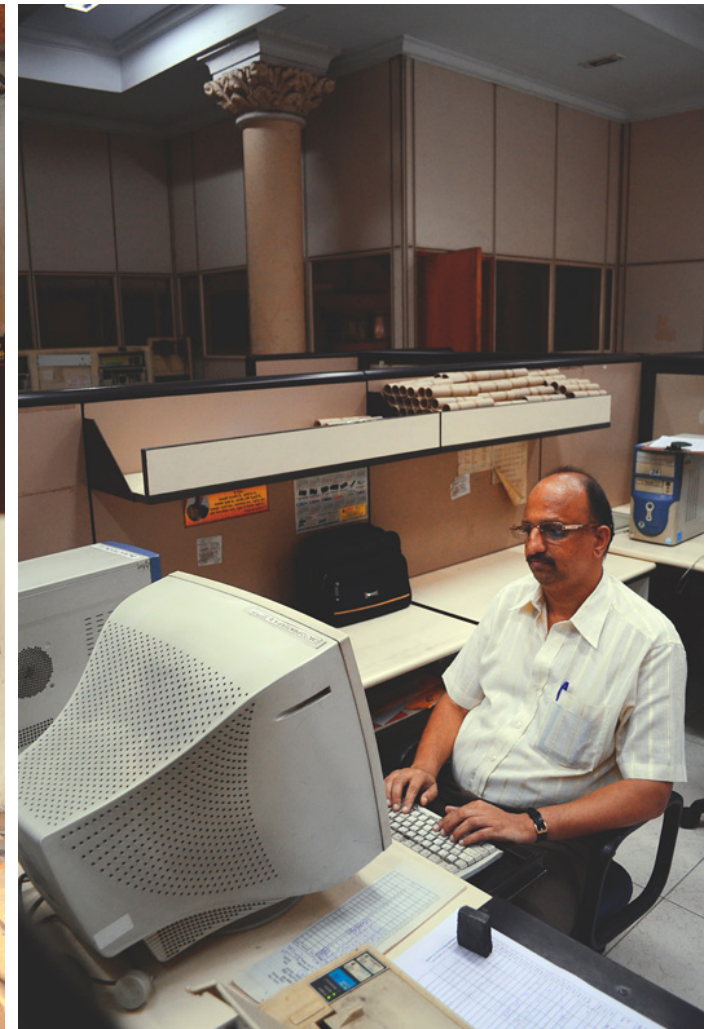by
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Mr. R.S. Renuse and Mr. G.T. Desai with a poster on discontinuation of telegram.

M.P. Kachre, Senior Telegraph Master – operating.

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Employees of the telegraph office.

Employees of the telegraph office.

Employees of the telegraph office.

Photos of different unions.

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Employee union office.

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Employees of the telegraph office.

Postman taking the telegrams to be delivered.

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Employees of the telegraph office.

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Telegraph

India's first telegram 'Taar' was transmitted through electric signals between Calcutta and Diamond Harbour in 1850. The distance between both the cities was 50Km. Word 'Telegram' is made of two Greek words (tele: distant and gramma: letter). A written message is transmitted using an electric device and wires, and delivered via post. Telegram used to be a widely spread and effective mode of communication in the earlier days, but in the current hi-tech era of e-mails and sms, its use has been restricted to only some fields. People used to get anxious with the arrival of telegram, as it was used for urgent and important messages only. Most common telegrams used to be of information of deaths and births.

Back in old days, the Central Telegram Office was filled with the telegraph machines, which used Morse code as the mode of communication. The whole office used to sound like a factory where many of the operators used to be busy decoding or transmitting the message in Morse code. Decoding required a careful listening to sound the machine created and manually writing it down on a piece of paper.

Then came the Teleprinter model, which used paper tape to print the messages, which were then pasted manually on the post card and sent to the destination. After that the Teleprinter model with normal paper was in use for a long time. The recent telegraphic system used web based telegram service where the message was typed and then transmitted through Internet. An official toll free number "1585" was also introduced where a person can send his message through phone. For the official records, telegrams are considered to be important, as it is one of the documents accepted by the judiciary system of India.

Telegram section.

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Telegram receipt.

Telegram form.

Filled Telegram form.

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Delivery sheet.

Latest web based telegram system.

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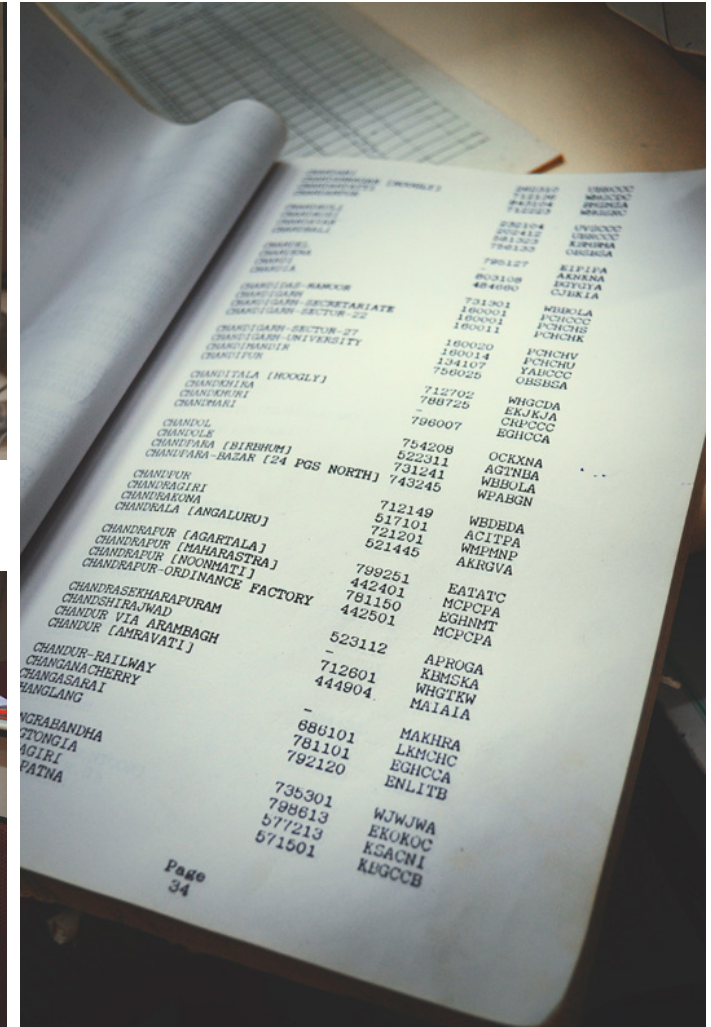
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Latest web based telegram system.

Accepting telegram on phone.

City codes.

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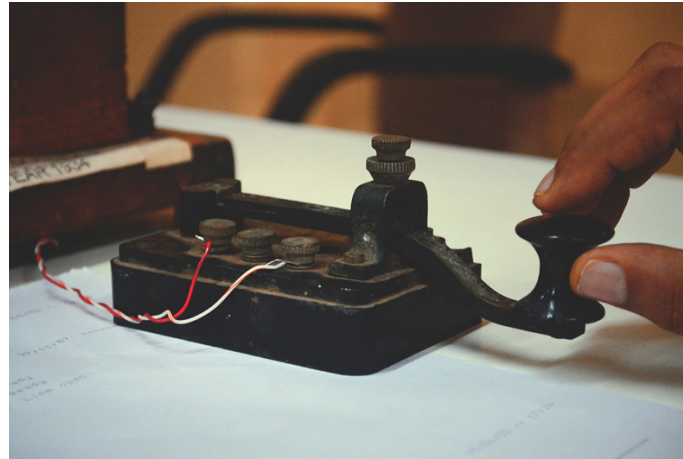## Central Telegram Office of Mumbai

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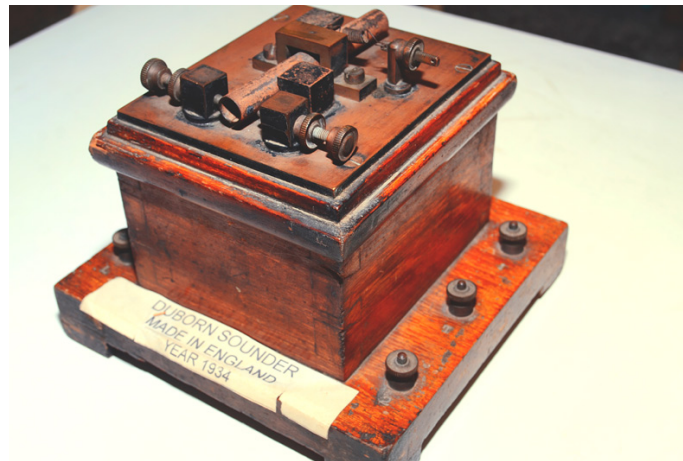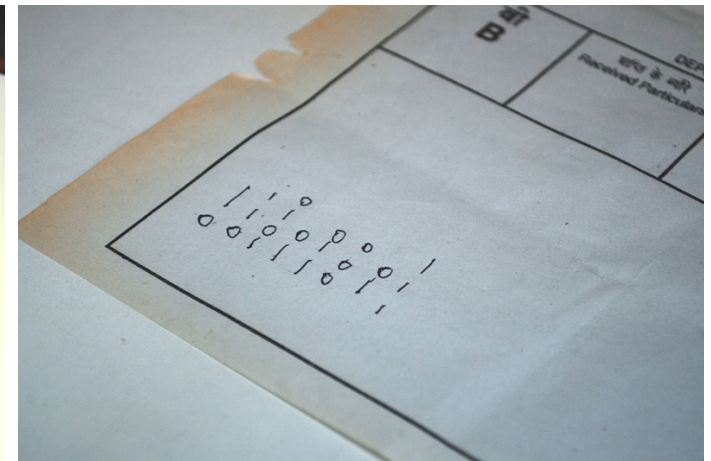by
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Morse code telegram system.

Morse code telegram system.

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Morse code example.

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Teleprinter.

Telegram.

Dispatch room.

Dispatch room.

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Officer handling the telegram to postman.

Office Files shelf.

Officer handling the telegram to postman.

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Contact Details

This documentation was done by Palash Vaswani, IDC, IIT Bombay.

You can get in touch with him at palsonline[at]gmail.com

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