

Tracing the evolution of the Olympics, through philately

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Jaagruthi Nithin Adka receiving the first prize in the junior category at APEX-2024, the fourth philatelic exhibition of the Ananthapuri Philatelic Association, for her philatelic exhibit on the Olympics.

It has been a week-and-a-half since the Paris Olympics concluded, but its magic lingers. Celebrating the spirit of the biggest sporting extravaganza, Jaagruthi Nithin Adka, a philatelist and numismatist from Bengaluru, displayed a philately exhibit 'Olympics – Bird's-Eye View' at APEX-2024, the fourth philatelic exhibition of the Ananthapuri Philatelic Association that concluded here recently. Jaagruthi won the first prize in the junior category for her efforts.

Jaagruthi's exhibit had some very interesting philatelic materials that depicted the evolution of the Olympics from the time it was a festival to the modern times with scores of disciplines and thousands of participants.

The material on display included stamps printed in Greece in 1960 on various sporting disciplines and the opening and closing ceremony tickets for the Beijing Olympics of 2008.

The exhibit began with the ancient Olympic Games, whose origin has many legends associated with it.

As these were religious and athletic festivals held in Olympia in ancient Greece, in connection with the Rome Olympics of 1960 Greece issued stamps that depicted traditional ceremonies such as lighting of the Olympic flame, oath taking, and entrance of chief judges, besides the disciplines of athletics, jumping, javelin throw, discus throw, and chariot racing.

A first-year student at the M.S. Ramaiah University of Applied Sciences, Bengaluru, 18-year-old Jaagruthi pointed out that the modern games started in Athens in 1896 and were then hosted by Paris in 1900 and St. Louis in 1904. Being a quadrennial event, the next Olympics were to be held in 1908, but it was decided to organise the Intercalated Olympic Games in Athens in 1906, ostensibly to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the 1896 Olympics. Jaagruthi has in her collection a postcard issued by Greece in 1906 for the Intercalated Olympic Games. The postcard has four stamps depicting Olympic disciplines.

First-day covers depicting IOC presidents, including Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the International Olympic Committee, that were issued by San Marino in 1959 in connection with the Rome Olympics the next year; colour trials of stamps issued in connection with the Los Angeles Olympics of 1984 and an aerogramme with a pictorial cancellation depicting the U.S. flag and LA city on the country's map, with Olympic rings and a torch-bearer that was issued by Austria; and a set of four stamps issued by India Post to commemorate the 86th session of the International Olympic Committee in New Delhi in 1983 were also exhibited. India also issued stamps on shooting and the Olympic torch in connection with the Montreal Olympics of 1976.

A highlight of the exhibit was two gold-foil stamps issued not by any country but by the Universal Postal Union, a United Nations agency, in connection with the Beijing Olympics of 2008.

A first-day cover on the Olympics with two cancellations from the same post office in Bihar four years apart is a novel display. Holographic stamps on diving, athletics,

gymnastics; 2D stamps on the five mascots of the Beijing Olympics and what they represent; and CD stamps brought out by North Korea for viewing the opening and closing ceremony of the Beijing Olympics were some other interesting aspects of her exhibit.

This year, Jaagruthi has won vermeil medals at Savpex 2024, the South African Virtual Philatelic Exhibition, and the Jakarta Asian International Stamp Exhibitions for her Olympic-theme exhibit.

Besides numismatics and philately, her other interests include karate and kick-boxing, Bharatanatyam, playing the keyboard, swimming, and skating.