

POSTAL NEWS

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1. Non-delivery of mail costs postal officials dear

12 May 2009, 0216 hrs IST, Viju B, TNN

MUMBAI: The South Mumbai District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum has directed

the chief postmaster-general of Mumbai and the postmaster in charge of Tardeo post office to pay Rs 8,000 for non-delivery of mail.

The consumer court had initially sent a notice to a Mahim airconditioner dealer after Shobha Alimchandani complained of deficiency in service but the envelope came back, with "address not known returned to sender" stamped on it. Alimchandani then located the address and filed a complaint against post office officials for shoddy service.

The post office's counsel argued that the beat postman had gone thrice to find the dealer but could not locate the office and only then was the envelope sent back to the consumer forum's office.

"We made further enquiries and found that the agency's office was not located in Al Sabah building but in a shop opposite to the building. The complaint is also not maintainable as the complainant is not a consumer as defined under the Consumer Protection Act," the counsel argued.

But the three-member forum, comprising Chandrakant Badgujar, Jyoti Iyer and Bharati Marfatia, observed that the beneficiary in the case was Alimchandani and, therefore, the case fell within the CPA's ambit.

"The complainant could locate the office and telephone and power bills have also been delivered to the same address. So, it should have been possible for the postman to locate the address," the bench said.

"We direct postal officials to jointly pay the complainant Rs 5,000 as compensation for expenses and Rs 3,000 as compensation for harassment," the forum said. Consumer activist Rajan Alimchandani said the complaint was filed on realising that

the complainant was being fooled by the postman who had not delivered the mail deliberately.

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2. Swiss Post - Airside And wholesale Under One Roof In UK

11 May 2009 by Steve Lawson - © Hellmail.co.uk

Swiss Post International (SPI) UK today announced that it will be relocating its two existing facilities at London Heathrow and Colnbrook, Berkshire to new, larger and more modern premises to accommodate increased business. This will bring together both airside and wholesale businesses in one location to streamline SPI UK's operations and consequently provide customers with an improved quality of service.

Relocation

The airside business, which is currently located at Heathrow airport will move to the new location in August 2009. The wholesale business, which is currently located in Colnbrook, Berkshire, will move in February 2010. The new site, which is almost 20% larger than the current sites combined, is four miles from the current airside business and six miles from the current wholesale business.

Quality customer service

The relocation will enable SPI UK to accommodate the increased business it is experiencing, particularly in alternative distribution solutions. It will also provide the company with an opportunity to re-engineer its operational processes with a project to automate mail handling and further increase its operational efficiency by cutting the overheads associated with having two sites. These benefits will ultimately improve the quality of service that SPI UK will be able to provide its customers across mail processing, air linehaul and back office functions. SPI UK will not be making any redundancies.

Swiss Post International UK General Manager, Paul Taylor said: "At SPI UK we provide top quality services to the UK mail market. Relocating our two sides of the business to one location is a significant move that will enable us to continue to achieve this goal and expand our business."

Commitment to the UK market

Daniel Baettig, Head of International Mail at Swiss Post International said: "The UK is one of the most significant foreign markets for Swiss Post International. This relocation demonstrates our long term commitment to the UK mail market and is a move that puts SPI UK in a position for future growth."

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3. Government Winning Match On Royal Mail Privatisation

11 May 2009 by Mark White - © Hellmail.co.uk

The row over the partial privatisation of Royal Mail has been a political tennis match for some weeks, but with the government now almost 'match point' stage, with the Conservatives indicating they will support the government to push the Postal Services Bill through in the Commons, Labour rebels are unlikely to get their way.

The government is adamant that a strategic partnership is now the only way to secure the future of the UK's main postal operator and at the same time preserve worker pensions and introduce the necessary commercial expertise. On the other side of the net is the CWU and Labour backbenchers wholly against the plan, saying that Royal Mail can still remain profitable without a strategic partnership.

Lord Clarke in the Lords today, said that growing numbers were against privatisation and that there was "nagging doubt" concerning the lack of reference to mistakes made by Postcomm in the Hooper report. He suggested that the government had made a hasty mistake in following the recommendations which did not reflect the present global economic crisis.

He refuted claims that Royal Mail was the least profitable postal operator in Europe and that it was weathering the recession better than its nearest rivals. He also underlined the findings of the Business & Enterprise Select Committee which had not been persuaded that a strategic partnership was essential to secure the future of Royal Mail.

Lord Clarke said his amendment to the Postal Services Bill offered a way forward for the government to disengage itself from the plan. He said that TNT in seeking an assurance of profit levels from Royal Mail was an unsuitable partner and that the government should admit that it has failed to find a satisfactory partner. He said if there was a need to sell Royal Mail, it was not now.

Lord Hunt said that the Conservatives had no intention of voting against reforms that it felt offered the best choice for Royal Mail's future - provided the government did not perform a u-turn that denied Royal Mail the opportunity of a partnership deal. He said the government needed to stand its ground and not offer further concessions to backbenchers.

"The Prime Minister should not be bullied into half-hearted reforms that fail to deliver," he said.

Lord Mandelson, currently championing the Postal Services Bill said:

"I am not going to be drawn on references to TNT except to say it gives a taste of what potential bidders are up against."

On speculation that the government was considering selling the GLS, Royal Mail's profitable European parcels arm, Lord Mandelson said:

"The government's focus is on finding the right strategic partnership, not selling GLS."

He said the legislation surrounding the Postal Services Bill arose from the Hooper Report and in line with the 2005 Labour manifesto. He dismissed suggestions of giving Royal Mail and the CWU a further chance, pointing out that obstruction by the CWU had meant 'draining attrition' between management and union and that ignoring the recommendations of the Hooper report would have been a dereliction of duty.

"We can't turn the clock back and wish away the internet." he said, emphasizing that the government sought to maintain public ownership but at the same time return it to good health. He said the alternatives solutions put forward were unworkable and that the suggestion of a three-year wait would only delay matters.

"It is the best way of transforming Royal Mail" he said.

In a press release issued by the Department for Business, Postal Services Minister Pat McFadden said:

"The measures the Government proposes can deliver our objectives, which are to put a publicly owned Royal Mail on a clear path to modernisation and, in so doing, to secure the future of the universal postal service which the Hooper report said was under threat.

"Royal Mail faces a stark choice about its future, to modernise or decline as mail volumes drop because of the shift to e-mail and text messaging. The Government has put forward proposals that offer Royal Mail the opportunity to survive in this new communications age, as well as respond to its customers' changing needs."

The government said it welcomed the Committee's support for the majority of the government's analysis and proposals, including that the status quo is not an option; clear recognition that Royal Mail Group is 'significantly less efficient than its competitors'; both management and unions must change; and that the government's proposed measures in respect of regulation and historic pensions' liabilities are important elements of a solution.

The government rejected the Committee's view that it should put a precise figure on modernisation.

Mr McFadden said:

"Modernisation is not a one-off event, nor simply about the purchase of some new machines. It must be an ongoing process in a fast changing commercial environment. The cost of modernisation will depend on the business plan agreed with any partner, how far reforms are taken, the speed of implementation, and the extent to which the Royal Mail seeks to become a leader in the communications market.

"Given Royal Mail's falling revenues and limited profits over the next few years, and pensions fund deficit, clearly Royal Mail will not be able to fund this investment alone. Additional capital will be required and this could be hundreds of millions of pounds, in addition to the funding we have already provided. And as well as capital, there is a need to transform Royal Mail in order to preserve the universal service which is at the heart of our postal system."

The government said it had made a number of moves to respond to some of the concerns raised by the Committee, including an amendment to impose a new duty on Post Office Ltd to provide an annual report on the Post Office network and its accessibility to consumers, particularly the most vulnerable, throughout the UK.

The government said it understood that the Select Committee is keen to see more information about the commercial process. The Secretary of State has committed to keep Parliament informed about important developments as the partnership negotiations progress and to report to Parliament. A government assessment of the alternatives to partnership will be published before the Commons stages of the Bill.

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4. NALC president: Frequent postage increases avoidable

Nancy Kearney

May 11 2009

Postage rate increases, such as the one that took effect today, can and should be avoided if Congress would rescind some of the “onerous financial shackles imposed” on the US Postal Service, according to the head of the national letter carriers union. The price of a first-class stamp rose 2 cents today, to 44 cents, the third straight annual increase. The USPS has said the price adjustments, which are pegged to the inflation rate, are needed for rising operational costs.

"Six-day, universal mail delivery in the United States remains the best postal bargain in the world," said National Association of Letter Carriers' President William H. Young in a statement.

"Future postage rate increases could be delayed or even avoided on a regular basis” if Congress could act on several key issues, he said.

Young said Congress should pass proposed legislation, H.R. 22, to correct the payment schedule for pre-funding postal retiree health benefits.

The proposed measure would allow the USPS to pay its share of contributions for the benefits, estimated to be \$2 billion this year, out of the Postal Service Retiree Health Benefits Fund, instead of its own pocket.

Postmaster General John E. Potter repeated his call for similar action in a May 4 letter to Rep. Stephen Lynch, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Post Office, and the District of Columbia. The bill, which has drawn 299 co-sponsors to date, was introduced in January and remains in the House subcommittee. The proposal also is backed by the American Postal Workers Union.

A subcommittee spokesman had said the panel does not have a set agenda at this time for when the proposal might be posted for discussion or vote. The subcommittee is expected to hold its next hearing on postal issues May 20, according to the spokesperson.

Young said Congress also needs to rescind a requirement that the USPS pay retiree benefits for employees covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System for the years they served in the military, noting the change would save the agency billions yearly.

The NALC represents 300,000 active and retired city delivery letter carriers.

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5. Postal service launches direct-mail promotional campaign

By Christopher Hosford

Story posted: May 11, 2009 - 12:12 pm EDT

Washington, D.C.—Using the very same tactics it recommends to marketers, the U.S. Postal Service has launched a direct-mail promotional and educational campaign touting the advantages of direct mail in a down economy.

The campaign's main element is a full-color, self-mailer measuring 6-by-9-inches, printed to look like an official dossier with multiple tabbed pages inside. It is headlined "Marketing Intelligence for Direct Marketers," and features mini-direct-mail case histories from companies including Dell and AT&T.

The piece also pitches two free offers via a business reply card: a DVD titled "Results-Driven Marketing in a Down Economy," with additional case studies and direct-mailing tips, and a \$5 "premium-brand" coffee card. The DVD and coffee card also are available on a personalized URL customized with the recipient's name.

In exchange for the free offers, the Postal Service asks recipients for information about their marketing plans, presumably to customize follow-up direct-mail promotional efforts.

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