

POSTAL NEWS

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- 1. EU asked to delay postal services liberalization. Sept 15, 2010.**
- 2. Korea Post braces for major changes. June 30, 2010.**

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1. EU asked to delay postal services liberalisation

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MEP's in Strasbourg have requested a moratorium on the full implementation of an upcoming EU law on the postal services, amid concerns that it could cause significant job losses in the sector.

The European directive due to come into force on January 1, 2011 would liberalise the postal market throughout the bloc, but MEP's want the measure delayed until an impact assessment is carried out.

Independent MEP Marian Harkin was among those who raised concerns directly this week with the EU's Internal Markets Commissioner Michel Barnier. Speaking at the European Parliament, she asked for a guarantee that a universal postal service would be maintained into the future.

"I have received many queries about the obligation to ensure the collection and delivery of postal items five days per week, and the Commissioner has a real responsibility to ensure that this is fully respected."

Fianna Fáil MEP Pat 'the Cope' Gallagher also emphasised the 'vital importance' of ensuring universal service, claiming that the postal sector is 'an integral part of the social fabric' of Ireland.

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2. Korea Post braces for major changes

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The country's main postal service provider aims to transform itself into a leading player in the Asia-Pacific region in the next 10 years harnessing the nation's cutting edge information technologies.

The Korea Post also said it seeks to expand its businesses to logistics, finance and social infrastructure.

It has set the Vision 2020, or the 4S strategy -- Smart Post, Smile Finance, Social Infra and Strong System -- in a bid to reach its sales target of 26 trillion won (\$21.3 billion) by 2020.

“Based on our nationwide network, we will rise to become a global company by linking individuals to individuals, individuals with private firms, firms with firms and making integration efforts for the country,” said Korea Post president Namgung Min.

“Smart Post” indicates that local postal service users will be able to create their own post offices online to deliver and receive mail at their preferred time and location. Post Tower in Myeong-dong, Seoul

They will also have easy access to getting administrative services such as copied forms of illness verification and building information with a single click on the Web.

The Seoul-based firm will also expand cooperation efforts with global logistics firms to give international express mail service to a greater number of nations, up from the current 10.

What is indicated by “Smile Finance” is that Korea Post will increase the figure of special finance products and offer micro credit services for underprivileged people to boost the level of self-sufficiency.

It is planning to provide multiple mobile applications which would add to the increasing number of the firm’s mobile finance services as smartphones continue to gain popularity.

The firm, affiliated with the Ministry of Knowledge Economy, will also issue electronic vouchers and cater information on welfare services provided by different organizations to improve its social infrastructure.

In a related effort, it will operate a comprehensive call center which will enable local residents to make reports in case of crimes, forest fires and environment distortion.

Korea Post will establish a simple but an internally-strong organization which gives different incentives based on their employees’ performance and competence.

“We expect to transform into a firm which is small in size but raises up to 26 trillion won -- 5 trillion won in postal services, 8 trillion won in post office banking system and 13 trillion won in post office insurances -- in 2020,” said Namgung.

With the announcement, made in part to celebrate its 10th year since establishment, Korea Post changed its corporate identity, which was used for the past 27 years.

Over the past, the Universal Postal Union, a specialized agency of the U.N. aiming to coordinate worldwide postal services, tapped Korea Post as a global leader in an annual appraisal earlier in April.

It was awarded the Gold Level for the fourth consecutive year in 2009. The Gold Level award is the UPU's top prize. A total of 158 member nations were taken into consideration.

The country's main service provider has also broadened its business opportunities from merely local mail services to new businesses overseas.

Aiming to become a bigger player in the global market, the Seoul-based firm is now strengthening ties with international organizations such as the Asian-Pacific Postal Union and the UPU.

It has also been beefing up exchanges with foreign peers since 2006 to help local information and technology companies enter overseas markets. Since then, the exports have jumped to 300 billion won in 2009, up from 251.3 billion won and 75.7 billion won in 2008 and 2006.

The president of the company previously held meetings with representatives from some 10 countries and sealed partnership deals with postal authorities from countries like Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Brunei and Hong Kong.

Korea Post dispatched postal IT promotion teams composed of government officials and representatives from the business and academic sectors and invited IT officials from overseas for further training last year.

The service provider's Web-based integrated postal information system called "PostNet" -- which links some 3,700 post offices across the nation to comprehensively manage postal logistical affairs and computerize the flow of mail -- has drawn interest from postal administrations in other countries.

"While global postal services have suffered from the global financial downturn, Korea Post has recorded profits every year and incomparably grown compared to its counterparts abroad," Namgung said.

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