

POSTAL NEWS

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1. **Postal services and electronic communications services, Slov, 4th quarter 07. March 31, 2008.**
2. **Thai postal workers given dog training. March 31, 2008.**
3. **Italian Postal Service Reports Encouraging Profit. March 30, 2008.**
4. **Postal closures – 20 votes could have meant victory. March 28, 2008.**
5. **Super fast hassle-free money transfer. Marc 31, 2008.**
6. **Greek Postal Savings Bank FY net falls 68 pct to 43.4 mln eur on trading losses. March 31, 2008.**
7. **Liberal MP accuses Harper government of misusing postal privileges. March 30, 2008.**

1. **Postal services and electronic communications services, Slov, 4th quarter 07**

(Marc 31, 2008) In the fourth quarter of 2007, the number of postal items was 8% higher than in the same period of 2006. In this comparison the volume of telephony services, expressed in the duration of calls, grew less, by more than 4%.

Number of postal items in 2007 over the level of the previous year

Compared to the same period of 2006, in the fourth quarter of 2007 national traffic grew by 8%. With 288 million postal items, i.e. 17% over the quarterly average, it exceeded the results of each of the previous quarters of 2007. The volume of international traffic grew by 4.5%: the number of incoming postal items was noticeably over the level of the fourth quarter of 2006, while the number of postal items directed abroad increased slightly.

Compared to the previous quarter, the number of postal items increased, too: in national traffic by more than a third (the increase is common for this comparison, in the last five years it has ranged from 18% to 35%) and in international traffic by 17.5%. The number of outgoing postal items increased significantly, while the number of incoming postal items remained practically on the level of the previous quarter.

Regarding the previous year the cumulative result in 2007 is positive - it shows a 3.6% growth of the number of postal items.

Number of telephone lines in fixed telephony continues to fall

427 million minutes of calls were realised in the fourth quarter of 2007, which is less than in the same quarter of 2006. In this comparison national traffic fell by 8.5%, while international traffic increased by 7.5%.

In the fourth quarter of 2007 the realisation of calls from fixed locations was 2% over the previous quarter. The growth of international traffic exceeded also the positive result of national traffic in this comparison period.

As regard the cumulative data 2007, the result for international traffic is a little better than the result for national traffic, too. National traffic fell almost by a tenth in comparison with the realisation of 2006.

The tendency of reducing the number of classic main telephone lines (PSTN and ISDN) goes on. They are being intensively replaced by lines based on internet technology (VoIP lines), which are not included in the presented data. Besides classical telephone lines, more than 122 thousand VoIP lines were in use at the end of December 2007, which is almost three times more than at the end of 2006.

The yearly national traffic in the mobile network grew by a tenth

64% of total outgoing telephone traffic was realized from the mobile network.

This in fact means that in the fourth quarter of 2007 the users of mobile network services exceeded the realization of the same quarter of 2006 by 12% and the realization of the previous quarter by 10%. In both comparisons increase was caused by the growth of national traffic; the duration of international calls did not reach the comparable periods.

Annual data show increase in national traffic, while international traffic in 2007 remained practically on the level of 2006. The traffic mentioned above was performed by more than 1,928,000 users of mobile network; 61% of them were subscribers, the other performed the services using prepaid SIM cards.

Fonte: <http://www.stat.si/>

2. Thai postal workers given dog training

Last Update: 3/30 10:05 pm

(Christopher Furlong, Getty Images)

Hundreds of Thai postal workers who brave the jaws of Bangkok's dogs are getting lessons in keeping safe on the capital's canine-infested streets.

Nearly 20 per cent of Thailand Post workers polled by the state enterprise said they had been attacked by dogs, prompting the launch of a day-long course teaching posties how to identify and deal with a dangerous dog.

"We tell them why the dogs attack, why the dogs don't like postmen," said Parntep Ratanakorn, dean of the veterinary science faculty at Mahidol University, which runs the training.

"It helps postmen feel safer when they do their jobs. This feeling of security will help them perform their roles," Ratanakorn says.

About 600 posties from Bangkok and its suburbs went through the training on Sunday, with more courses - dubbed "Friendly With Dogs - How To Win Four Legs' Heart" - planned across the kingdom in the future, Parntep said.

About 300,000 stray dogs live on Bangkok's streets, local animal charities estimate.

And while Thais are increasingly keeping dogs as pets, experts say canines get nervous when the postman approaches as they feel their territory is being invaded leading to attacks by man's best friend.

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3. Italian Postal Service Reports Encouraging Profit

30 March 2008 by Mark White - © Hellmail.co.uk

The Poste Italiane Group, led by Massimo Sarmi, announces a positive operating performance for the sixth consecutive year, with net profit of €843.6 million up 25% on the previous year (€675.7 million), operating profit of €1.77 billion up 19% (€1.49 billion in 2006) and an EBIT margin of 15.5%, which is once again the highest among European postal services providers.

Total revenue of €17.2 billion (€17.1 billion in 2006) primarily reflects the good performances recorded by all business segments, with improvements in operating profit (Financial Services up 2.7% and Postal Services up 3.8%) and external revenue at the Parent Company rising 3.8% to €9.1 billion. The Parent Company's net profit is

€704.4 million (€483.3 million in 2006), marking an increase of 45.7% on the previous year.

Six consecutive years of strong earnings growth are the result of constant extension of the Group's offerings, ongoing improvements in efficiency and the introduction of best human resource management practices. The strategy has focused on launching innovative, secure and accessible postal, financial and mobile telecommunications products. As our customer base has grown, the international rating agencies have shown their appreciation: Fitch has confirmed its positive rating (A+ and stable outlook), whilst Standard&Poor's has included Poste Italiane among its top runners in the sector thanks to our business diversification capability.

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4. Postal closures – 20 votes could have meant victory

MPs have been told that closing post offices around Bognor Regis would rip the heart out of their communities. The claim was made by the town's MP, Nick Gibb, during a House of Commons debate which came within 20 votes of inflicting a defeat on the government.

Mr Gibb said: "If the Hawthorn Road and South Bersted branches closed, a large area of residential Bognor would be devoid of any post office branch.

"Part of that area encompasses two of the most deprived wards in West Sussex. Only one third of residents in Pevensey, for example, own a car.

"Given poor public transport there is great reliance on post offices remaining local.

"Closing these two branches would present real difficulties for many residents in the area."

For the Craigweil branch in Barrack Lane in Aldwick, the fear is that its loss would have a severe knock-on effect for the other shops in Coastguards Parade, Mr Gibbs stated.

"If we lose the shop and post office, which is run by Barbara and Robin Doe, the whole hub of that community will go as well," he claimed.

The Craigweil branch, along with the neighbouring Aldwick one, also served population with large numbers of elderly residents. Nearly four out of ten residents around the branches were aged over 65. One in 20 were 85-plus.

The debate last Wednesday evening was brought by the Conservatives to protest against the closure of 2,500 post offices around the country.

The Tories' motion attacked the six week consultation programme for proposed c

losures and the access criteria used to determine which branches should go.

It also called for business expansion and potential business opportunities to be explored before any further branches are axed.

Several Labour MPs supported the motion to mean it was only defeated by 288 votes to 268.

Five branches in the Bognor area have been earmarked by Post Office Ltd for possible closure.

They are Aldwick in Aldwick Street; Craigweil, Barrack Lane; South Bersted, Gordon Avenue; Hawthorn Road and Station Road.

Protests about the closures have been held for four of the branches. Letters and petitions have been sent off among the 4,500 protests for the potential axings in Berkshire, Surrey and West Sussex .

Consultation about the proposals closed on March 10. An announcement about which branches will shut is expected next month. The closures will take place after May 31.

Last Updated: 28 March 2008 4:25 PM

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Star City

5. Super fast hassle-free money transfer

Special counters at local post offices soon to do the job in 'just 10 minutes'
City Correspondent

Dhaka dwellers will soon be able to enjoy speedy and secure electronic money transfer at the local post offices thanks to a joint venture between the Postal Department and Western Union.

Under a five-year contract with the Postal Department, the internationally famed money transferring company will soon open special counters in designated post offices so that people can easily collect remittances sent from abroad.

The venture aims to alleviate hassles and remove insecurities in transferring money or making payments in both local and international addresses, sources said.

"We are trying to take the Postal Department to a new level so that the general people can get better services and more benefits," said an official at the General Post Office (GPO).

Initially, around 30 post offices will operate special counters to handle money-transferring jobs. Besides the capital, another 420 post offices throughout the country will also offer similar services.

"As per the contract, we are launching our services through 450 post offices in Bangladesh in the first phase. The number of such postal Western Union money receiving points will increase gradually," said Anil Kapur, managing director of Western Union for South Asia.

Under the project, the designated postal offices will run the special money transferring desks for the next 5 years. Usual fees will be collected by the Western Union while the Postal Department will receive 25 percent in commission from the money-transferring organisation.

Western Union's electronic money transfer system allows a person to collect money sent from any part of the globe within 10 minutes. The recipients do not require having any bank account or so to collect the amount.

"It can be termed as a super fast hassle free method to transfer money and remittances," said a General Post Office (GPO) spokesperson.

According to the sources at the GPO, the Postal Department is awaiting the Bangladesh Bank to sanction a reserve account for Western Union. Once endorsed, the Postal Department will transact the money through a state-run bank, preferably the Sonali Bank.

"We only deal in local currency. That is why we will need the assistance of a bank to convert foreign currencies into taka," said A K M Rafiqul Alam, Additional Director of the Postal Department.

The new scheme comes at a time when the postal department's services are experiencing sharp decline with the advent of efficient and convenient alternatives. Majority of Dhaka dwellers these days consider postal services as outdated and awkward.

Sources at the General Post Office (GPO) however claimed that the venture with the Western Union is the beginning of the postal department's pursuit for more efficiency and better services.

"It is needless to say that the postal department have been lagging behind when it comes to technology and innovation. But, the Postal Department is still one of the most trusted and secure means for money orders and remittances," said an official at the GPO.

Postal Department Director General Mobassherur Rahman brackets the venture as a boiling point in delivering services to people.

"Now people will be more encouraged to transact money in legitimate ways rather than using illegal and murky means," said Mobassherur Rahman.

“Bangladesh Postal Department has a tremendous reach over each and every corner of the country. Teaming up with such a gigantic organisation will allow us to expand our services to a huge population,” said Anil Kapur, adding that the Western Union will provide logistic support to the Postal Department.

According to sources, each of the designated post offices will deploy specially trained officials who will be responsible for overseeing the money transferring process. These officials receive training from the Western Union to ensure efficient services.

"Since we are specialised in providing money transferring services, we are optimistic that our participation in the process will be of considerable help to everyone, especially the people living in the rural areas," said Anil Kapur.

Postal officials believe that the general people would be greatly benefited from this new service at post offices.

"While the main purpose of the project was to make it easy for villagers to receive money remitted by expatriate Bangladeshis, everyone will benefit from it in time of need," said a GPO spokesperson.

"It will be really helpful if I can collect the money from the local post office," said Masudur Rahman, a resident of Tongi who has a son working in a middle-east country. He travels all the way from Tongi to Dhaka to receive the money.

"This is undoubtedly a good decision of the Postal Department. A lot of people like myself will surely benefit from it," said Rehnuma Akter. Rehnuma's husband works in Malaysia. "We hope their service will be able to keep the reputations of a private organisation like the Western Union," she added.

Earlier, the Postal Department also made a similar contract with the Department of Immigration and Passport (DIP) for easing the process of passports.

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Thomson Financial News

6. Greek Postal Savings Bank FY net falls 68 pct to 43.4 mln eur on trading losses

03.31.08, 4:06 AM ET

ATHENS (Thomson Financial) - Greek Postal Savings Bank S.A. said in a published balance sheet that 2007 full year net profits plunged 68 percent to 43.4 million euro because the bank posted trading losses of 17.3 million euro due to exposure in US sub-prime loans.

Management will be proposing the distribution of 0.25 euro dividend per share which implies a 2.16 percent dividend yield.

Twelve month net interest income rose 16 percent year on year to 294.4 million euro but fee income fell 55 percent year on year to 11.26 million euro.

Operating expenses rose 6 percent to 214.5 million euro and the cost to income ratio came in at 73 percent from 49 percent in 2006.

Full year provisions were up 19 percent to 28.7 million euro.

Loans accelerated 26 percent to 6.1 billion euro and deposits grew 4 percent to 11.1 billion euro.

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7. Liberal MP accuses Harper government of misusing postal privileges

Geoff Nixon , Canwest News Service
Published: Sunday, March 30, 2008

OTTAWA - A former Conservative MP says Stephen Harper's government has sent tens of millions of advertising flyers to Canadian households in an "unprecedented" use of MP printing and mailing services in 2008.

Garth Turner, who now sits as a Liberal, believes Conservative MPs have printed between 30 million and 50 million black-and-white flyers over the past 90 days - all at taxpayers' expense.

"It's millions of dollars of taxpayers' money," he said in an interview.

Conservative spokesman Ryan Sparrow said "tens of millions" of flyers "would be a gross exaggeration," though he wouldn't say how many mailouts had been sent.

All were distributed "within the rules of the House of Commons," he added.

Turner said Canada Post employees have observed "huge skids wrapped in plastic," full of flyers, being shipped out across Canada, and his fellow Liberal MPs have also reported large numbers of flyers arriving in their ridings.

Turner thinks the flyers - some of which have included jabs at Liberal leader Stephane Dion - are too partisan to be considered legitimate MP communication materials.

"These are attack ads," Turner said. "The messages are very stark and they have nothing to do with the individual efforts of politicians."

The flyers have turned up in ridings as far away as British Columbia, and as near as Ottawa West-Nepean - the home riding of Environment Minister John Baird - where voters have received at least four such mailings since the start of the year.

Karen Brown, a Liberal party member from Mississauga, says she has received three mailouts since the beginning of January - including one from a Conservative MP in Alberta.

She questioned the need to distribute the flyers when the country isn't in the middle of an election.

David Stow, who lives in Gibsons, B.C., says he has received six flyers - two copies of three different mailouts - over the same time period.

He is not impressed that taxpayers are funding the flyers he has been receiving at his home.

"The more partisan a flyer is, the more annoying it is to see an MP using parliamentary privilege to pay for it," Stow said.

In government lingo, the mailouts are called "10 per centers" - printed materials sent out by MPs to a maximum of 10 per cent of the total number of households in a given riding. They are approved by the House of Commons and are required to meet content and design specifications. They must also identify the name of a sponsoring MP so that constituents are "able to readily identify the primary sender of the document, with no risk of confusion."

Turner said he believes the Conservatives are "pushing the envelope" in the way they are using government printing and mailing services.

"It's been a perversion of the rules . . . and now it's become a de-facto reality," he said.

Turner said he intends to bring up the issue of the mailouts with the Board of Internal Economy when it meets in Ottawa on Monday.

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