

POSTAL NEWS

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1. Kenya to host UPU Strategy Conference in 2010

BY CORRESPONDENT

Updated 5days 22 hours 21 minutes ago

NAIROBI, Kenya, Nov 13 - The Government has entered into an agreement with the United Nations to host a global postal meeting in Nairobi next year.

Information and Communications Minister Samuel Poghisio and the Director General of the Universal Postal Union (UPU), Edouard Dayan, on Wednesday signed a formal agreement on the hosting of the UPU Strategy Conference in Nairobi in September 2010.

A brief signing ceremony was held at UPU headquarters in Berne, Switzerland, on the sidelines of the ongoing UPU's Council of Administration. The UPU is a specialized agency of the UN dealing with postal matters.

The Council of Administration is the body of 41 member countries that oversees the Union's activities. Kenya is the current chair.

"The post is going through tremendous transformation in response to new challenges brought about by the changing market environment and technology," said the Minister.

"It is our responsibility, as UPU members, to ensure the post continues to play the important role it does in our economies. The Nairobi Strategy Conference will be one important forum to discuss the future of this important industry," he added.

The Strategy Conference will take place on September 22 and 23, 2010, at the United Nations complex in Nairobi.

About 800 delegates from the UPU's 191 member countries and international organizations are expected to attend the meeting. The Strategy Conference is held at the half-way point between two Universal Postal Congresses to monitor progress in achieving the UPU's world postal strategy.

The last Universal Postal Congress, held every four years, took place in Geneva in 2008.

Participants at the Strategy Conference will also examine the issues and priorities affecting the global postal sector that should be incorporated in the next UPU strategy, to be adopted at the 2012 Universal Postal Congress in Qatar.

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2. 85% of surrogate accounts found in postal savings system

Nov 13, 2009.

TAIPEI, Taiwan -- The postal savings system has become the largest source of surrogate accounts utilized by fraud rings, as up to 85 percent of such accounts were found to be postal savings accounts, an opposition lawmaker cited statistics compiled by the Control Yuan as indicating yesterday.

Lawmaker Yeh Yi-jing of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party said at the transportation committee session, held to screen the 2010 budget of Chunghwa Post, that from 2004 to May 2009, there were as many as 3,973 surrogate accounts found at the postal savings system, with 85.8 percent of these accounts found to be being utilized by swindle gangs.

Yeh blasted the Chunghwa Post for failing to strictly screen the identification data and pictures of those who open accounts at postal offices around the island.

Yeh said Chunghwa Post has virtually become the largest “helper” of con rings.

The lawmaker also cited tallies compiled by the Cabinet-level Financial Supervisory Commission as indicating that of the 195 demerits in financial operations listed by the FSC, 54 were committed by the Chunghwa Post, mainly involving the failure to thoroughly screen the identification data of those who opened accounts at the postal savings system operated by state-run postal service company.

In response, You Fang-lai, chairman of the Chunghwa Post, said that what Yeh said was true, but he added that the majority of a total of 30 million postal savings accounts are kept by low- to medium-class people, who are more likely to be lured by con rings into offering their ID data to open surrogate accounts. You said his company will screen more rigidly the ID data of people who want to open postal savings accounts.

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3. US Postal Service has \$3.8 bln loss in fiscal '09

Mon Nov 16, 2009 5:38pm EST

By Jasmin Melvin

WASHINGTON, Nov 16 (Reuters) - The U.S. Postal Service reported a \$3.8 billion net loss for its fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, as some \$6 billion in cost savings were not enough to keep pace with plunging mail volumes.

The agency, which delivers nearly half the world's mail, saw 26 billion fewer pieces of mail in fiscal 2009 as global economic weakness took its toll.

The 12.7 percent drop in mail volume to 177.1 billion pieces from a year earlier was more than double any previous decline the agency has seen, said Joseph Corbett, the agency's chief financial officer.

"Primarily it was the recession which drove the volumes down so quickly and with very little warning to us," Corbett told reporters.

Increased use of email and competition from FedEx (FDX.N), United Parcel Service (UPS.N) and other delivery services also continued to contribute to falling mail volumes.

Annual operating expenses totaled \$71.8 billion, down 7.6 percent from the previous year, but the drop in mail volume caused operating revenue to slip 9.1 percent to \$68.1 billion.

The loss would have been worse except for legislation which allowed the agency to postpone the recognition of billions of dollars in prefunded retiree health benefit payments.

The Postal Service had been concerned it might not be able to take advantage of the legislation because the law was signed after the close of the fiscal year. But it later determined that Congress' intention was clear that the bill should apply to fiscal 2009. [ID:nN26203518]

The Postal Service is pushing for additional legislative measures to ease its financial load, including more relief from the prefunding of retiree benefits and flexibility to shift to a five-day delivery week from the current six-day week.

"We really need two changes, at least of that order of magnitude, in order to get the Postal Service back towards financial health," Corbett said.

The agency estimates a shorter delivery week would save at least \$3 billion while not having to prefund retirement benefits would free up some \$3 billion to \$5 billion.

Monday, Nov. 16, 2009

4. Post office set to close in 2011

Nick Malawskey- nmalawsk@centredaily.com

PLEASANT GAP — In 1845, a small community of a few homes was placed on the map — and its name set in stone — when a post office opened near a fork in the Bellefonte-Lewistown turnpike.

Now plans are being made to close the Pleasant Gap postal facility in February 2011, completing a consolidation begun almost 40 years ago.

There was a time when Pleasant Gap had its own ZIP code — 16869 — and its own post office on Main Street, in a building it shared with the water company.

The post office moved to its current location, a building at 157 W. College Ave. rented from G.M. McCrossin, in the 1960s.

In the early 1970s, the post office was merged with the one in Bellefonte. Pleasant Gap's ZIP code was dropped and it became a "branch office," a small but subtle difference in postal lexicon.

To discontinue service at a main office, the U.S. Postal Service must notify the general public, then hold a 60-day public comment period. The closure can be appealed to the Postal Regulatory Commission.

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Closing a branch office is much simpler — no public notification or comment period is required, and there's no appeals process.

"I guess it's more 'politically correct' " and easier, to close a branch than a main office, said Mike Shuey, a Pleasant Gap resident who recently retired from the Postal Service.

Bellefonte Postmaster Greg Miller confirmed that the Pleasant Gap branch will close in 2011 but would not discuss why.

"The contract is up in 2011 and we are not renewing it," he said.

Tad Kelley, spokesman for the Postal Service western region of Pennsylvania, said declining revenues at Pleasant Gap and the cost of renewing the lease led to the decision to close the office.

Fiscal concerns with the service generally have prompted it to review many of its leased stations or branch office locations, he said.

"Mail volumes in all categories and classes of mail have experienced historic declines. Like mail volume, window transactions at our retail units have declined substantially," Kelley said.

Miller said patrons in Pleasant Gap will be directed to use the Bellefonte office, where their postal boxes will be relocated. They may also have an option for delivery service and will be able to keep their Pleasant Gap addresses.

That doesn't sit well with some in Pleasant Gap. One resident, Carl Hill, has taken it upon himself to try and save the office. He has started a petition drive, collecting close to 500 signatures citing the "tremendous negative impact" of the closure on the community.

"It would be a hardship for a lot of people," Hill said.

He said he, like many others, first heard about the closure through the rumor mill.

Hill, who stood outside the branch one Wednesday morning collecting signatures for his petition, said most of the people he had talked to were unaware of the planned closure.

"Nothing was posted ... probably 95 percent of the people I talked to that morning had no idea it was closing," he said.

Kathleen McCrossin, who owns the building that houses the branch, said she believes the post office is trying to close the branch "as quickly and quietly as possible."

The branch was not among a list of 667 facilities being considered for possible closure that was sent by the Postal Service to the Postal Regulatory Commission in July.

Nor was it mentioned, she said, during a discussion she had with the Postal Service around that time. But in September she received notification that the Postal Service would be terminating the lease and closing the building in February 2011.

"I understand they have fiscal problems, but jeez ... a tiny little place like that? It won't affect their bottom line," she said.

Shuey said the branch office generated revenue.

"We made more money than a lot of post offices that are post offices," he said.

Whatever the reasoning, Hill said he and others in the community plan to fight the closing. In addition to the petition, he is writing to state and federal lawmakers, asking them to become involved.

"I'm determined I'm not going to let it drop without a battle," Hill said.

Nick Malawskey can be reached at 235-3928.

Read more:

<http://www.centredaily.com/news/local/story/1626859.html#ixzz0XLiE7OvC>

5. Palestine set to take control of own postal system

Published yesterday (updated) 19/11/2009 17:51 Mandate-era Palestinian postage stamps [MaanImages]Ramallah - Ma'an - Palestine was allocated a postal code by the Universal Postal Union (UPU) following successful talks with the International Bureau in Berne, Switzerland, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology announced Wednesday.

Head of the Mission to the union Mahmoud Diwan said the move would help guarantee the independence of the Palestinian postal system when it is re-launched, and make it distinct from the Israeli system. Currently, mail destined for the West Bank and Gaza from international locations must be posted "care of" or "via" Israel. Only when couriering packages within the West Bank or from the West Bank to Gaza is labeling "Palestine" acceptable.

"The Universal Postal Union has taken a series of decisions and steps that aim to facilitate the exchange of direct mail between Palestine and other countries," Diwan said on his return from the meetings.

The UPU, a UN body since 1948, said the adoption of the Palestinian postal codes would give Palestine access to the development funds and expertise of the organization, according to Diwan.

Regulations of the body say "any member of the United Nations may accede to the UPU. Sovereign countries that are not members of the UN may also become members of the UPU provided that their requests are approved by at least two-thirds of the member countries of the Union."

Being granted a postal code by the UPU is the first step in becoming a full member.

Diwan noted the UPU also approved a technical cooperation program aimed at improving the Palestinian postal services, which will include the training of staff and development of an independent system of mail transport and delivery.

More than the regulation of post and delivery to Palestinian addresses directly from all over the world without Israeli intervention, Diwan said, the development of a Palestinian postal system will generate revenue for the state. Money made by the system for the first several years would be re-invested into the development and expansion of services.

The resolution by the UPU comes in addition to a national track prepared by the ministry, Diwan said, which would see the activation of some sectors of the postal service in the coming weeks.

E-mail address : chairulanwar49@operamail.com, uyungchairul@plasa.com.