

POSTAL NEWS

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1. Japanese minister to resign over postal reform

(AFP) – Jun 10, 2010

TOKYO — Japanese postal reform minister Shizuka Kamei, leader of a minority party in the governing coalition, announced his resignation on Friday in a row over postal privatisation.

The departure of the veteran politician, who will also step down from his post of financial services minister, comes as a blow to new Prime Minister Naoto Kan, who only unveiled his new cabinet on Tuesday.

However Kamei, who heads the People's New Party (PNP), said his party would remain in the coalition and keep up its partnership with Kan's Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ).

Kan, Japan's fifth premier in four years, was to address parliament later on Friday for the first time since taking office.

Postal reform has been a vexed issue in Japanese politics due to the vast scale of Japan Post's operations, which spread well beyond mail delivery into banking and insurance.

Kamei's PNP was created in 2005 primarily to resist a shake-up of the postal system under the reformist prime minister of the day, Junichiro Koizumi.

Kamei, an outspoken politician who abandoned Koizumi's Liberal Democratic Party due to the postal row, accused the DPJ of going back on promises to water down postal reform.

"Because a promise between the two parties was broken, I have decided to leave the cabinet to take the responsibility," Kamei told reporters, adding that he had already informed Kan of his intention to resign.

PNP secretary-general Shozaburo Jimi is likely to succeed Kamei as postal reform minister and financial services minister, news reports said.

The two parties had earlier agreed to enact a bill designed to scale back postal reform during the current parliament term that ends on June 16, but the DPJ is now proposing to carry it over to the next Diet session.

DPJ secretary-general Yukio Edano told reporters Kamei's resignation decision was "quite unfortunate".

"But (the PNP) has said it will work in the current structure of the government," he added. "I'm sure that we can continue the government with a minimum impact."

Kan announced his cabinet line-up on Tuesday, keeping 11 of 17 ministers in their posts, including Kamei, in a show of continuity from the previous administration.

Kan wants to hold upper house elections on July 11 as originally planned, without losing momentum following an early upsurge in public support.

But Kamei had asked Kan to extend the current parliament session so that PNP's top-priority bill could be passed quickly.

Separately, the opposition camp is demanding the resignation of National Policy Minister Satoshi Arai, who is alleged to have made a false claim on his office expenses.

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2. The Royal Mail: a history of the British postal service

The Royal Mail could be sold off entirely on the stock market under radical coalition plans, The Daily Telegraph has exclusively disclosed. Here we take a look at the turbulent but distinguished history of the British postal service.

By Heidi Blake

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1516 Henry VII established a "Master of the Posts", a position which evolved into the office of the Postmaster General.

1635 Charles I made the postal service available to the public, with the cost of postage being paid by the recipient.

1654 Oliver Cromwell granted a monopoly over the mail delivery service in England to the "Office of Postage".

1657 Fixed postal rates were introduced.

1660 Charles II established the General Post Office.

1661 The postage date stamp was first used, and the first Postmaster General was appointed.

1784 The first mail coach was introduced between Bristol and London. Early mail coaches were similar to ordinary family carriages but bore the Post Office livery.

1793 Uniformed post men hit the streets for the first time.

1830 The first mail train from Liverpool to Manchester Railway made its first deliveries.

1837 Rowland Hill, a schoolmaster from Birmingham, invented the adhesive postage stamp – an act for which he was knighted.

1838 The Post Office Money order system introduced.

1840 The first adhesive postage stamp, the Penny Black, was released nationally, and the Uniform Penny Post, by which letters could be sent for one penny, was established.

1852 The first Post Office pillar box was erected in Jersey.

1853 The first post boxes were erected in mainland Britain.

1857 The first wall boxes were installed Shrewsbury and Market Drayton.

1870 The Post Office launched its telegraph service. The same year the Post Office Act banned sending of “indecent or obscene” literature; introduced the ½d rate for postcards, and provided for the issue of newspaper wrappers. The first postcards were also issued.

1880 Postmen began to use bicycles to deliver the mail.

1881 The Postal order was introduced.

1883 The Parcel post began.

1912 The Post Office opened its national telephone service.

1968 Second class stamps were introduced and the National Giro Bank opened.

1969 Under the Post Office Act of 1969, the General Post Office changed from a government department to a nationalised industry.

1971 Postal services in Great Britain were suspended for two months between January and March as the result of a national postal strike over pay.

1974 The system of postcodes was rolled out across Britain.

1977 The Telegram service was abolished.

1981 The Telecommunications arm of the postal service split off to form British Telecom. The remainder of the business is renamed as the "Post Office".

1986 The letter delivery, parcel delivery and post office arms of the mail service was split into three separate businesses under the name Post Office Group.

1988 Postal workers held their first national strike for 17 years over bonuses being paid to recruit new workers in London and the South East.

1990 Girobank was sold to the Alliance & Leicester Building Society and the Royal Mail Parcels business was rebranded as Parcelforce.

2001 The Post Office Group is renamed Consignia in a massive, but short-lived, rebranding exercise which cost £2 million.

2002 15-months after it was renamed Consignia, the postal service is renamed the Royal Mail. John Roberts, chief executive, announced his departure from the group after announcing annual losses of £1.1bn.

2004 Deliveries reduced to once-daily.

2005 Mail Trains were reintroduced on some lines.

2006 Royal Mail lost its monopoly on the postal service when the regulator, PostComm, opened up the market three years ahead of the rest of Europe. Competitors can carry mail and pass it to Royal Mail for delivery. Pricing in Proportion (Pip) is also introduced for first and second class inland mail.

2006 Online postage allowed Royal Mail customers to pay for postage on the internet, without the need to buy traditional stamps.

2007 Official industrial action took place over pay, conditions and pensions and Sunday collections from pillar boxes end. Royal Mail announces plans to close 2500 Post Office branches.

2009 The Communication Workers Union opened a national ballot for industrial action and workers vote to strike over pay and jobs. Lord Mandelson, the Labour business secretary, launched an attempt to part-privatise the Royal Mail. The bid failed after the CWU stirred up a storm of backbench revolt.

2010 The new Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition announced its intention to sell off the Royal Mail's delivery business but retain the Post Office network in public

ownership. Delivery bicycles began to be phased out, 130 years after they were first used.

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3. Postal service is a study in confusion

To the editor, Read with great interest, the article about an experience with the U.S. Postal Service, I have also had several nitpicking experiences with them.

To the editor,

Read with great interest, the article about an experience with the U.S. Postal Service, I have also had several nitpicking experiences with them. It's no small wonder that they are always on the brink of disaster. But being a government operation, they cannot fail.

If you think you have heard them all, try this one on for size. A short time ago, I mailed two birthday cards to two different locations. The cards were in identical-sized envelopes, with standard postage. About a week later, I had returned to me one of the envelopes marked "insufficient postage." I went to the Hastings Post Office to enquire why it was so marked. The lady at the counter produced a cardboard with some lines on it. She laid my envelope on it and then said, "The envelope is a quarter inch larger than a standard size envelope. This requires double postage."

One card went through the system and was received on time, and the other one got there some time after the birthday.

Do you suppose some postal worker had just returned from eight weeks of paid vacation and saw an opportunity to do something profound?

They are a study in total confusion.

Harold Mueller

Hastings

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