



CPC International Postal Update

By: John Cicchitti

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COVID-19 again drove international postal news in the past quarter. Postal services around the globe continue to adapt and innovate to fight the pandemic's effects. India, Ireland, and Zimbabwe are among the countries that have made notable innovations to help their citizens through the crisis.

Beyond COVID-19, there were many notable developments. A spending scandal led to the resignation of Australia Post's Chief Executive Officer. Azerbaijan joined PostEurop. Pakistan has begun opening over 1,000 digital post offices. And the United States and India inked an agreement to exchange electronic customs data.

These and other issues are discussed below.

New COVID-19 Variant Disrupts UK Postal Service

The discovery in the United Kingdom of a more transmissible COVID-19 mutation led to significant delays for domestic and international package delivery ahead of Christmas, reported [The Guardian](#). Royal Mail stopped deliveries to Europe, Canada, and Turkey, while Germany [stopped delivering](#) to the United Kingdom. Further disrupting international shipments, the United Kingdom closed the port of Dover and grounded international flights.

Countries Face Slowing Postal Deliveries Due to COVID-19

With COVID-19 numbers spiking in late 2020, many countries saw significant postal delays during their busiest time of the year. As such, distributors and consumers had service delays. [Japan Post](#) and Hungary's [Magyar Post](#) were among the postal services that saw widespread mail delays. Elsewhere, organizations like Germany's [Deutsche Post](#) only experienced delays in packages.

UPU Announces New Congress Date

The [Universal Postal Union](#) (UPU) announced that its 27th Universal Postal Congress will occur in August 2021 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. The UPU previously planned to hold the Congress in August 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the gathering. The planned 2020 Congress was also scheduled to meet in Côte d'Ivoire.

Australia Post Rocked by Watch Scandal

Australia's postal service was in the news due to a scandal surrounding gifts to top executives. Four Cartier watches caused major headaches



The type of luxury watch that Cartier sells.

Source: Wikimedia.

for Australia Post leadership, [The Guardian](#) reported in late October. The watches were purchased using Australia Post funds to reward some of the organization's leaders.

Post Chief Executive Officer Christine Holgate originally told the country's parliament that each watch was worth about \$3,000. The actual value turned out to be thousands of dollars higher. The resulting scandal led to Holgate's resignation in early November, reported [Post & Parcel](#). Holgate expressed willingness to fully participate in shareholders' investigations into the spending.



Former Australia Post CEO Christine Holgate. Source: Wikimedia.

Pakistan Opens New Digital Post Offices

Pakistan plans to open over 1,000 new digital post offices in franchising agreements with enterprise-minded citizens, reported [Parcel and Postal Technology International](#). Over 20,000 applicants requested to open a digital post office, and the south Asian country launched 120 of the new facilities in early December. [Bol News](#) reported that the post offices will also provide financial services "by using state-of-the-art technology."

Zimbabwe's Postal Service Adds Online Shopping, Other Services

Zimpost, the national postal carrier of Zimbabwe, now sells goods and services on its platform. The new function fills an Amazon-like role "whereby customers would select items onto a shopping cart, confirm their order, make payment, while Zimpost handles the shipping and distribution of the goods locally and internationally," said [The Herald](#).

The program is driven by COVID-19 and economic growth. The service is contactless, and Zimbabwe's postal minister said that it is part of a development plan to turn the country into an upper-middle class society.

India Post Perseveres Through COVID-19, Inks Deal with U.S. Postal Service

With the country struggling under the COVID-19 pandemic, India Post has stepped up to help citizens through the worst of the crisis, according to a new [Vice](#) report. The service picked up fruit crops, delivered medicines to hospitals, and disbursed



India Post's logo. Source: Wikimedia.

money deliveries, all while maintaining its regular postal functions.

India Post also worked with the United States to ease export restrictions. It entered an agreement with the United States Postal Service to exchange electronic customs data, RepublicWorld.com reported. The electronic data will allow items to clear customs faster, facilitating a quicker exchange of goods between the two countries.

Ireland's Postal Service Offers Free Support to Nursing Homes

In an effort to ease the loneliness associated with the COVID-19 lockdowns, Ireland's An Post announced it would "offer free postal services to those sending letters and parcels to nursing and care homes around Ireland," Buzz.ie reported. The program, [Community Focus](http://CommunityFocus), provides newspaper delivery, mail collection, and mail delivery.

Azerbaijan Joins European Postal Association

Azerpost joined the European postal association, PostEurop, in late November, said Azernews. The Caucasus nation's postal director lauded his service's track record, saying it has met its obligations amid COVID-19 challenges.



*Azerbaijan is located at the nexus of Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia.
Source: Wikimedia.*

Poste Italiane Buys Rival

Italy's former postal monopoly purchased a fledgling rival in November, Nasdaq reported. Poste Italiane purchased Nexive, "giving it a market share in Italy of around 94% in mail delivery and 24% in parcel distribution." Italy privatized part of Poste Italiane in 2015.

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