OVERVIEW OF JAPAN POSTAL GROUP UNION (JPGU) AND JAPAN POST GROUP

JAPAN POSTAL GROUP UNION (JPGU)

JPGU was created as a large, and unified postal union on October 22, 2007, just after privatization of Japan Postal Public Corporation on October 1, 2007. It represents employees in Japan Post Group and has been making robust efforts to unionize non-union members and newly recruited employees, as well as part-timers, for stronger collective bargaining power against JP Group companies.

JPGU’s members are working hard for the Japan Post Group companies. JPGU consists of 13 regional offices and about 460 branches across the nation (as of August 2018). The slogan of JPGU is “Fraternity, Creation, and Contribution.” JPGU is carrying out various activities for realizing the true happiness of its union members. In addition, in order to support our members’ livelihoods, the JPGU offers its own mutual aid services at reasonable prices.

The declining birth rate and the aging of society are rapidly advancing, causing a workforce shortage to become a major national issue in Japan. Around fifty percent of all employees in Japan Post Group are non-regular workers, and the expansion and realization of a decent life is, in general, emerging as a social issue. As the mission of trade unions, efforts to create quality jobs and to narrow the gap in disparities are great challenges.

At the same time, as we believe that improving social environments and vitalizing local communities are also important, we are also making various efforts in these fields.

JAPAN POST GROUP

Japan Post, being the universal service provider, is obliged to provide 6-days-a-week deliveries at a uniform rate for letters and postcards in Japan. Japan’s modern postal system dates back to 1871, with the postal bank being founded in 1875, and postal life insurance becoming available from 1916. The rise of neo-liberalism impacted Japan’s postal services in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. In 2001, as the result of a reorganization of central government ministries, the Japan Postal Agency

JAPAN POSTAL GROUP UNION (JPGU) PRESIDENT’S REMARKS

Japan Post Group is providing such services as mail delivery, post bank, and postal insurance for customers and citizens. Taking advantage of its postal network, Japan Post Group is aiming to become a comprehensive life support group. As employees, JPGU members are providing a firm underpinning for Japan Post Group.

JPGU totals about 244,000 members (180,000 regular and 64,000 fixed-term employees). “The aim of JPGU is to pursue happiness for all its union members, and the slogan of JPGU is “Fraternity, Creation, and Contribution.”

Regarding the postal business environment, mail items handled have been declining in a similar manner to those in the countries of Europe and North America. Meanwhile, the numbers of parcels have been increasing in accordance with the expansion of E-commerce business logistics. At the same time, re-delivery for undeliverable items is drastically on the rise due to absence of the recipients. For hardworking JPGU members under these conditions, JPGU is devising a mechanism through bargaining procedures with managements of Japan Post Group companies for excellent working conditions for part-timers and reemployed aged workers that JPGU should be proud of.

JPGU is making efforts to create better livelihoods. With wisdom, we are working together with our members to make our postal businesses into a Japan Post Group from a glocal point of view.

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was set up as an exterior entity of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC). In 2003, the Japan Postal Public Corporation, a government-owned corporation with a private business management style, was established.

In 2007, that public corporation was privatized into Japan Post Group. Simultaneously, its operations were split into four different operations, a post office company, a mail delivery company, a post bank, and postal insurance, which were placed under the umbrella of the Japan Post Holdings.

The privatization and split off of Japan’s postal system brought about a downgrading in service levels for customers and citizens. In addition, various business regulations still continued even after privatization, making it impossible for Japan Post to strengthen the business base which should have been realized after privatization. This resulted in fierce competition with private companies. Accordingly, the revised Postal Privatization Act, which obligated a financial universal service for Japan Post Bank and Japan Post Insurance, was legislated in 2012. That revised law reorganized the four different operations into three units under Japan Post Holdings for postal operations and better customer services.

In 2015 the Japanese government simultaneously floated a trio of companies, Japan Post Holdings, Japan Post Bank, Japan Post Insurance on the stock market, selling 11% of its shares in Japan Post Bank, Japan Post Insurance, and the parent Holdings for a total of 1.19 trillion yen.

In September 2017, the government launched a follow-up sale of Japan Post Holdings, raising about 1.3 trillion yen ($12.1 billion). The income was used as financial resources for reconstruction following the Great East Japan Earthquake that occurred in 2011.

On April 4, 2019, Japan Post Holdings announced it would sell off a certain amount of its shares on stock market. In the wake of these disposals of shares, the Japan Post Holding’s stake in these companie will fall to about 65%.

On April 9, 2019, furthermore, the Finance Ministry announced that the sale will cut the ministry’s stake to the legally mandated minimum of just over one-third from the current 57%, moving to end a privatization process that has lasted for more than a decade.

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**Fig.1 Overview of Japan Post Group (As of April 9, 2019)**
In global strategy, Japan Post Group bought out an Australia-based company, Toll Holdings. The 40,000 employees of this company provide freight, logistics, express services, and others with an extensive global logistics network across 1,200 locations in more than 50 countries.

**JAPAN POST GROUP’S POSITION**

Japan Post operates its business through about 24,000 post offices as the postal network. The group owns more than 180,000 street post boxes. Japan Post Group also operates other businesses, such as six postal hospitals and about 60 hotels.

**MARKET STRUCTURE**

Japan Post faces a decrease in volume in the mail market and an increase in volume in the parcel market. In FY2018, Japan Post handled a total of 21,735 million items (17,222 million mail items, 3,637 million booklet parcels, and 876 million parcels). Regarding mail volume, this represents a decrease of about 4.7% to 17,222 million items from FY2016 to FY2018. Meanwhile, parcels increased by about 37.8% in the same period.

That made Japan Post the third largest parcel operator in Japan, followed by the private providers Yamato Transport and Sagawa Express.

Traditional mail volume declines and the parcel volume increase due to the growth of e-commerce, along with the substitution of emails for posted letters, has brought about global-scale impacts. Like other major postal operators around the world, Japan Post Group is making efforts to secure profits through diversifying services and developing new services such as a “watch-over-your -parents service (a system for protecting aged parents)” service, real estate development business using postal assets, and others. Japan Post is making use of its existing network and employees for these services.
JPGU’s International Activities

JPGU is affiliated with UNI Global Union, which consists of 900 unions and 20 million organized workers all over the world. Bro. Mitsugi Masuda, President of JPGU, is serving as Vice President of UNI as well as president of UNI Apro Post & Logistics Sector. He exercises leadership from a global viewpoint to promote the international trade union movement both inside and outside Japan. We continue to help develop human resources in other counties.

1. UNI Apro East Asia Postal Unions Forum

Three postal unions in East Asia, JPGU, Chunghwa Postal Workers’ Union (CPWU, Taiwan) and Korean Postal Workers’ Union (KPU, Korea) hold a postal forum every year. As the three postal operators in this area are each providing three postal services, mail, savings, and insurance, the three postal unions are talking about postal service issues and labor issues on common ground. The 1st Postal Unions Forum was held in 2002, and the forum in 2018 was the 16th meeting.

2. JPGU sponsoring UNI Apro/Asia Pacific Postal Union Joint Seminar, SEWU-THP (Thailand’s Postal Union) Joint Seminar in Thailand

The UNI Apro Post and Logistics/APP (Asia Pacific Postal Union) Joint Seminar for young trade unionists has been held each year since 2000. It is conducted on the basis of the MoU concluded between UNI Apro and APP (Asia Pacific Postal Union) to promote social dialogues and develop joint activities. Together with this seminar, a SEWU-THP Joint Seminar was organized in which Thailand’s Postal Union leaders and APP (Asia Pacific Postal Union) seminar participants also participated.

UNI Apro East Asian Postal Unions Forum (Tokyo, Oct. 2018)

UNI Apro / SEWU-THP Joint Seminar (Bangkok, July 2018)
UNI Apro Post and Logistics signed an MOU with APPU for the first time in 2010, and this MOU has now been renewed three times. APPU and UNI Apro agree to promote social dialogue and partnership industrial relations to ensure the sustainable development of postal services in Asia and the Pacific.

At the global level, UNI concluded an MoU with UPU (Universal Postal Union) in 2008, and a new cooperation agreement between UNI and UPU was signed in 2018. The Agreement sets out an agenda of cooperation between UNI and UPU with a strong emphasis on sustainable development and innovation in the postal sector. The MoU promises to further strengthen the bonds between the world’s postal workers and the international postal community.

3. UNI Apro/JPGU English Seminar

JPGU and UNI Apro has jointly organized a seminar for JPGU youth members every year since 2011. It is designed for youth members to learn about the international trade union movement and postal environments overseas in English through resource persons from foreign postal unions.

4. Other international activities

Seminars for postal unions in the Philippines, Indonesia and India are held every year. Participants from JPGU and counter-partner unions learn and share knowledge about labor conditions and the postal service situation in each country.

JPGU has exchange programs with CPWU, KPWU, Vietnam Union of Information and Communications Workers (VNUICW) and National Committee of the Chinese Defense Industry, Postal and Telecommunications Workers’ Union (including the China Post Trade Union). Through these programs, we exchange information and discuss the challenges we face today.

With the help of the UNI liaison councils of the Philippines and Sri Lanka, JPGU Tokyo and JPGU Kanto, regional organizations of JPGU, have been conducting scholarship programs for the children of postal union members in these two countries. This humanitarian assistance is also supported by youth committee members in these two countries.
Aims and tasks of UNI Apro Post & Logistics Sector

UNI Apro Post & Logistics Sector is dealing with any kind of issues such as pre-research on unionizing postal workers and logistics workers, coordination between UNI and ITF, coordination between APPU and UNI Apro, postal research, and others.

UNI Apro Post & Logistics keeps a close watch on postal trends such as liberalization, privatization, mergers, IPO, digitalization and the impact on workers. UNI Apro Post & Logistics collects, analyzes and shares information with postal communities through the UNI Apro postal meetings. UNI Apro Post & Logistics holds annual committee meetings and a sector conference every four years.

JPGU has been leading the post & logistics sector as the president and has also contributed to the development of the post & logistics trade union movement.

What is UNI-LCJapan? A Domestic Consultation and Coordination Body

UNI-LCJapan (UNI Liaison Council Japan) is the domestic council in which UNI affiliates in Japan discuss their involvement in UNI activities and harmonize their opinions and positions. In conjunction with UNI consolidation, UNI-LCJapan was formed in January 2000 and has been expanding its membership with determined commitment to organizing. As of February 2019, UNI-LCJapan consists of 14 affiliated unions with a total of 1,022,700 members and carries out activities in close cooperation with UNI / UNI Apro.

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