



## Smart banking to start soon THE NAMIBIAN, 13 January, 2006

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**STRIDES have been made towards the establishment of the country's first smart-card technology, which is to be implemented by the Namibia Post.**

Smart Switch Namibia (SSN), which is a joint venture between NamPost and a South African based company, Net 1 Universal Electronic Payment Systems, is the company that will facilitate electronic payment transactions by clients using the smart card.

NamPost is the first major client of SSN, which is headed by local business personality, Martin Shipanga.

SSN was launched last September with the parties saying the system would be implemented and be in use by next month.

Besides revolutionising banking technology for NamPost clients, the smart card is also aimed at roping in more people who have been termed 'unbankable' from every corner and remote places of the country.

All of the 120 NamPost service outlets are expected to be computerised by the time the smart card comes into operation next month.

But are NamPost clients adept with the new technology and are they ready for the major change? NamPost Chief Executive Officer, Sakaria Nghikembua was optimistic when he spoke to The Namibian this week, explaining that the whole system was simple and used biometric fingerprint identification, eliminating PIN codes.

SSN, with its head office in Windhoek, has set up a switch to support the use of the smart card, and NamPost would replace clients' savings books with smart cards.

Nghikembua said the investment demonstrated faith in their line of business and confidence in the future.

"We have to use technology to deliver better service and do not fear technology as some kind of threat.

We can only succeed if we continually innovate."

He added that a campaign was being conceptualised and would be revealed to the public in the next two weeks.

Personal information, according to Nghikembua, had also been passed onto existing customers at post office level countrywide.

Nghikembua added that unlike in many instances where technology replaces humans at their jobs, this change would not see any job losses for permanent NamPost staff, but would require retraining for employees working for the parastatal.



The efforts of this technological progress could, however, only be fully deduced when the system becomes operational and clients will be able to tell whether it is an improvement on the old system.

NamPost and Net1 have both seconded interim staff to kick-start the company.

Recruitment for permanent staff is currently happening.

The switch has been installed and is functional.

Nghikembua welcomed having to work with Shipanga, who joined Net 1 and was seconded to SSN this year, saying Shipanga with his substantial experience in executive management, banking and information technology would be crucial in rolling out the services that SSN provides not just to NamPost but to other players in the economy as well.

Smart card technology - developed by Net 1 in 1990 - is also used in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Malawi, Rwanda, Mozambique, Ghana and Burundi among other countries.