

Question asked by Hon Fred LI regarding long queuing time for payment through the PayThruPost service when its scope was extended on 3 October

Date of sitting : 7 November 2001

Asked by : Hon Fred Li

Replied by : Secretary for Economic Services

Question :

With effect from 3 October, the public can pay general Government fees and charges at post offices via the PayThruPost service. It has been reported that on the first day the service was introduced, large crowds queued up at various post offices to make payments and, to cope with this, some post offices extended their service hours. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council of:

(a) the number of payments of Government fees and charges made via the PayThruPost service and the average waiting time of the public who used this service to make payments on that day;

(b) the names of the post offices which extended their service hours on that day and the respective time of their extension; and

(c) ways to shorten the waiting time to make payments?

Reply:

Madam President,

(a) On 3 October, the first day when the PayThruPost service was extended to take payment for Government bills, the Hongkong Post (HKPO) handled a total of 69 400 bills, of which 36 900 were Government bills. Although the service is available at all post offices in Hong Kong, most people chose to make their payments at post offices located in the vicinity of the former collection offices of the Treasury or the collection offices of the District Offices in the New Territories where

they used to make payments, and it also happened that the fee collection computer system of the HKPO experienced some technical problems. Some members of the public had to wait for more than 30 minutes at some post offices on that day. For the less patronized post offices, the average waiting time was between 10 to 15 minutes.

The situation has since improved greatly. Post offices in general are able to meet their performance pledges, i.e. members of the public are served within 10 minutes on normal working days and within 25 minutes during busy hours and peak periods.

(b) As some members of the public were still queuing for service at certain post offices after the normal business hours on 3 October, the post offices concerned decided to extend their business hours until all members of the public in the queue had been served. On that day, 66 post offices (Appendix) extended their business hours for about 10 to 30 minutes.

(c) In view of the public's positive response to the PayThruPost service, the HKPO has taken the following measures to maintain the standard of its services -

(1) adjusting the business hours of some of the post offices and engaging security guards for maintaining order at the busier post offices;

(2) setting up a temporary PayThruPost service centre on the first floor of the Yuen Long District Office Building as from 8 October to alleviate the load at the Yuen Long Post Office and, expanding the counter hall and adding more workstations to the Lam Tin Post Office as from 15 October;

(3) in addition to the originally planned staff complement of 40 and workstations at nearly 100 counters, 95 more staff members have been re-deployed to the counter service of the PayThruPost. At the same time, the fee collection computer system has also been upgraded in terms of speed and capacity; and

(4) different counters for payment and normal postal services have been set up in the majority of post offices.

End October is normally one of the peak periods for the payment of

Government bills. In anticipation of that, the HKPO had especially advanced or extended the business hours and provided cheque collection boxes at certain post offices during the period from 26 to 31 October, so as to enhance the standard of its service and shorten the waiting time for its patrons. Similar special arrangements will be adopted during all peak periods for Government bill payments, i.e. during the months of January, April, July and October.

Experience in the last month indicates that most people choose to make payments at those post offices located in the vicinity of the former collection offices of the Treasury or the collection offices of the District Offices in the New Territories, leading to a surge in demand for service at certain post offices. To ensure that members of the public would be able to enjoy an efficient and convenient PayThruPost service, the HKPO will conduct publicity aimed at getting a more even spread of patrons to other post offices in the districts.

Appendix

Post Offices that closed late on 3 October 2001

Hong Kong (Island)

Aberdeen Post Office, Chai Wan Post Office, Causeway Bay Post Office, Discovery Bay Post Office, Gloucester Road Post Office, Happy Valley Post Office, Hennessy Road Post Office, Hing Man Street Post Office, King's Road Post Office, Kennedy Town Post Office, Morrison Hill Post Office, North Point Post Office, Shau Kei Wan Post Office, Siu Sai Wan Post Office, Sheung Wan Post Office, Sai Ying Pun Post Office, Tai Koo Shing Post Office, Tsat Tsz Mui Post Office, Wan Chai Post Office, Wong Chuk Hang Post Office, Wyndham Street Post Office

Kowloon

Choi Hung Chuen Post Office, Cheung Sha Wan Post Office, Fu Shan Post Office, Granville Road Post Office, Hung Hom Bay Post Office, Kowloon Bay Post Office, Kowloon City Post Office, Kwun Tong Post Office, Kwong Wa Street Post Office, Lei Cheng Uk Post Office, Lam Tin Post Office, Mei Foo Sun Chuen Post Office, Ngau Chi Wan Post

Office, Ngau Tau Kok Post Office, Oi Man Post Office, Po Lam Post Office, Sheung Tak Post Office, Shek Kip Mei Post Office, Sau Mau Ping Post Office, Tai Kok Tsui Post Office, To Kwa Wan Post Office, Tsz Wan Shan Post Office, Wong Tai Sin Post Office

New Territories

Butterfly Post Office, Fo Tan Post Office, Fu Shin Post Office, Kam Tin Post Office, Kwai Fong Post Office, Kwong Yuen Post Office, Leung King Post Office, Ma On Shan Post office, On Ting Post Office, Sha Tin Central Post Office, Sai Kung Post Office, Shek Lei Post Office, Sun Chui Post Office, San Tin Post Office, Shek Wu Hui Post Office, Tuen Mun Central Post Office, Tai Hing Post Office, Tin Yiu Post Office, Tai Po Post Office, Wah Ming Post Office, Yuen Long Post Office, Tung Chung Post Office