

## LCQ8: New delivery arrangement for mail items

Following is a question by the Hon Lau Kwok-fan and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (March 27):

Question:

It has been reported that the Hongkong Post (HKP) has recently implemented a new measure: when postmen make door delivery of mail items requiring signature by recipients (such as registered, Speedpost and Local CourierPost letters/packages), or when post office counter staff deliver mail items requiring signature to persons holding mail delivery notification cards, they are no longer required to request the recipients of these mail items to produce identity documents for identity verification. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether HKP had consulted the public before implementing the new measure; if so, of the outcome; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) whether HKP has so far received any complaint lodged by members of the public concerning the new measure; if so, of the details;
- (3) as some members of the public have pointed out that mail items requiring signature, the charges for which are higher than those for surface mail items, originally have an important advantage of ensuring that the recipients are either the designated recipients of mail items or persons whose identities are traceable, whether HKP has assessed if the new measure has rendered mail items requiring signature losing this advantage and thus made such items no different from surface mail items; if HKP has assessed and the outcome is in the affirmative, of the remedial measures; if the assessment outcome is in the negative, the justifications for that; and
- (4) as some members of the public have pointed out that people post mail items requiring signature for the purpose of preventing recipients, after receiving such mail items, from denying receipt of them, but under the new measure, when the designated recipients of mail items requiring signature claim that they have never received the items, HKP can hardly verify such claims as there is no way to confirm the identities of the recipients of the items, thus defeating the purpose of posting such items, whether HKP has any solution?

Reply:

President,

With regard to the question raised by the Hon Lau Kwok-fan, our reply is

as follows:

It is the established principle of various postal administrations and courier sector that mail items are delivered according to the address (i.e. delivery to the address) but not to the designated addressee as given on the mail item (i.e. delivery to the addressee). This is also the practice adopted by Hongkong Post. Under this principle, mail delivery is mainly classified into two categories, namely, "signature for the receipt not required" and "signature for the receipt required".

For a mail item where signature for the receipt is not required, delivery is deemed successful when such an item is delivered to the address (such as in the case of putting the mail item into the letter box of its corresponding address). For a mail item where signature for the receipt is required (including registered mail, Speedpost item, parcel and Local CourierPost item, etc.), delivery is deemed successful only when such an item is delivered to the address and signature for the receipt is obtained from the recipient who does not necessarily have to be the addressee.

In the past, for a mail item where signature for the receipt was required, Hongkong Post would require the person who received the item at the address at the time of delivery to produce his/her identification document if it could not be ascertained whether such person was entitled to receiving it. The name of the recipient and the first four alphanumeric characters of his/her identification document would be recorded. In case of unsuccessful door delivery (such as no one was present to receive the item), a notification card would be left at the address concerned or in its letter box, notifying the addressee to collect the item from a designated post office. At the time of collection, the card holder would be required to produce his/her identification document, so as to prove that he/she is the addressee of the mail item. If the card holder was not the addressee of the item, he/she would be required to produce a copy of the identification document of the addressee and the original identification document of his/her own. If the identification document of the addressee or the card holder did not show the name as given on the mail item, he/she would be required to provide supporting documents to show that the addressee was living with the card holder or to prove their relationship (such as certificate of marriage, residential proof showing that the card holder lived at the delivery address, etc). Staff at the post office would examine the above documents and record the name of the card holder and the first four alphanumeric characters of his/her identification document when the mail item was delivered.

With the rapid development of e-commerce, the number of online purchases delivered through the postal system has been increasing. Some of the online shopping platforms allow online shoppers to post their orders without using their real names. Hongkong Post received quite a number of complaints directly from members of the public or referred by the Office of the Ombudsman, questioning the reason for requiring the person receiving or collecting the mail item to produce his/her identification document or other information, adding that it would be difficult for some of them to produce proof of address (such as housewives and minors who would not be holders of

household accounts). It was considered that the above measures had caused great nuisances to the public and failed to keep up with social development.

Hongkong Post conducted a review in this connection, and considered that its past practice had deviated from the principle of "delivery to the address" and would be easily mistaken that mail delivery service was based on a principle of "delivery to the addressee". The past experience also showed that information about the names and the first four alphanumeric characters of the identification documents of the recipients collected at time of delivering the mail item did not help much in tracking down the missing mail items. As such, Hongkong Post has since March 4 made the following adjustments to the delivery arrangement for mail items where signature for the receipt is required:

(a) if someone is present at the delivery address, he/she is allowed to receive the mail item and sign to acknowledge its receipt, without the need to produce his/her identification document or his/her information be recorded; and

(b) if no one is present at the delivery address to receive the mail item, the postman will leave a notification card at the address or in its letter box. At the time of collecting the item and signing to acknowledge its receipt, the card holder will not be required to produce his/her identification document, or proof showing that he/she is living with the addressee or his/her relationship with the addressee. The post office will file the notification card and the process will be taped by the closed-circuit television at the counter as in the normal circumstances.

The new delivery arrangement above has been operating smoothly since its implementation.

According to Hongkong Post, there are enquiries and complaints concerning the new delivery arrangements (a total of 15 as at March 13). The main concern is whether it is safe to deliver mail items which require signature for the receipt without checking the identification documents (e.g., a person would be able to collect another's mail item if the notification card is stolen), and that it would be difficult to track an item in the event of a dispute over its delivery.

Hongkong Post understands the worries of individual members of the public and notes that letter boxes of tenement buildings in some old districts and the rural areas are less secure. Starting from March 20, Hongkong Post has fine-tuned the new arrangements. When door delivery of a mail item which requires signature for the receipt is unsuccessful and a notification card is to be issued, the card holder when making collection from the designated post office will be required to produce his/her identification document and his/her name will be recorded before signing to acknowledge its receipt.

Hongkong Post will continue to monitor the operation of the new arrangements, and from time to time assess the impact of the arrangements and

adjust the operational details taking into account the factors of social changes, public needs and mail security. Hongkong Post will also continue to promote the correct way of writing addresses; remind senders to provide return addresses and affix sufficient postage, and the need for households or commercial tenants to install secure and proper letterboxes etc., in order to facilitate safe and smooth delivery of mails.