

Transport Department's response to media enquiries

A spokesman for the Transport Department (TD) today (December 22) responded to media enquiries on the incident of errors for toll charging at Western Harbour Crossing after the toll service provider wrongly applied the old toll table in the morning on December 18. The time-varying tolls were implemented successfully at 5am on December 17 and have been operating normally since then. On December 18, the toll service provider found that there was an error in the toll table from 10.02am onwards, and corrected the tolls according to the correct time-varying toll table at 11.04am. On that day, the TD immediately requested the toll service provider to make refunds, conduct a serious investigation and immediately plug the loophole of the error, as well as propose improvement measures to the workflow and system operation in future.

According to the preliminary information provided by the toll service provider on that day, the incident did not involve a system problem but a human factor and it was suspected that someone tampered with the system. In order to ascertain whether the anomalous tampering was intentional, the Police therefore proactively launched an investigation.

The investigation revealed that the incident was caused by negligence of the staff of the toll service provider. Firstly, the staff responsible for the system did not clear an old command immediately when updating the toll tables for the implementation of the time-varying tolls. At 10.02am on December 18, another staff member responsible for the operation, mistakenly approved the old command with others when performing daily operational approvals, resulting in the replacement of the time-varying toll table by the old one and charged wrong tolls. According to the Police's investigation, the incident did not involve any criminal element.

TD has summoned the management of the toll service provider on December 20 to express strong dissatisfaction with the incident. As instructed by TD, the service provider also took immediate measures to step up monitoring of the proper functioning of the system to prevent intervention to the system, including internal human error intervention or external malicious intervention, and took internal disciplinary actions, including issuing written warnings to the staff concerned and terminating the duties of the supervisory staff. Also, the TD will arrange for an independent audit to review the system operation procedures of the toll service provider, and has already added in the key procedures of the system operation the requirement of obtaining the TD's authorisation for double authentication, so as to ensure that similar incidents will not recur.

The TD has also received the report from the toll service provider and is reviewing the contents of the investigation report in detail. The TD will request the toll service provider to make further improvements.