

For information  
on 21 July 2003

**Legislative Council Panel on  
Information Technology and Broadcasting**

**Free e-Cert on Smart Identity Card**

**Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on the one-stop opt-in process and publicity campaign for Hongkong Post's offer of one year's free use of e-Cert to be embedded on the multi-application smart identity (ID) card .

**Background**

2. Hongkong Post (HKP), a Government department operating as a trading fund, commenced its certification authority (CA) operation in January 2000. The Hongkong Post Certification Authority (HKPCA) is a recognized CA under the Electronic Transactions Ordinance, providing a trustworthy service to the community. HKPCA issues digital certificates, under the brand name "e-Cert", to individuals and organizations.

3. e-Cert can be used not only for ensuring the confidentiality of electronic transactions but also for generating digital signature (a secure form of electronic signature<sup>1</sup>) which ensures non-repudiation of an electronic transaction and the authenticity and integrity of the information transmitted in the transaction. e-Cert thus enables the conduct of electronic transactions in a secure manner. There are now a wide range of applications adopting e-Cert, including online stock trading, banking, auction, betting and such E-government services as filing of tax return and renewal of driving licence.

4. The Immigration Department (ImmD) started issuing smart ID

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<sup>1</sup> Under the ETO, an "electronic signature" means any letters, characters, numbers or symbols in digital form attached to or logically associated with an electronic record, and executed or adopted for the purpose of authenticating or approving the electronic record.

cards to those reaching the age of 11 or 18, new arrivals, and applicants for replacement of lost or damaged ID cards on 23 June 2003. The replacement exercise for old type ID card holders will be rolled out on 18 August 2003 and will take four years to complete. One of the applications available on the smart ID card is the e-Cert issued by HKP. With a view to creating a critical mass of e-Cert holders to drive the adoption and further development of e-business and E-government in Hong Kong, HKP would offer all Hong Kong residents eligible to apply for the smart ID cards during the four-year replacement exercise one year's free use of e-Cert to be embedded onto their smart ID cards. Residents may opt for the free e-Cert on a voluntary basis.

## **Application for and Issuance of e-Cert**

### *e-Cert Application*

5. For privacy and security reasons, the application for free e-Cert and ID card replacement will be two segregated processes. However, to encourage the public to opt for the free e-Cert, the Government will provide a user-friendly one-stop service for opting for the free e-Cert and ID card replacement. HKP will set up service counters at each of the nine Smart ID Card Centres (SIDCCs) of the ImmD so that residents visiting the SIDCCs for replacing their ID cards will be able to opt for the free e-Cert at the same time.

6. At the SIDCCs, residents will first complete the application process for ID card replacement. ImmD staff will then assist to direct residents who would like to opt for the free e-Cert to HKP's service counters. The resident will have to complete and submit a simple application form<sup>2</sup> and present his old type ID card to HKP staff at HKP's service counter for identity verification. After completing the verification, HKP staff will distribute a personal identification number (PIN) in a securely sealed envelope to the resident for using the e-Cert.

7. Besides opting for the free e-Cert at SIDCCs at the time of

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<sup>2</sup> The information required in the application form includes the applicant's Hong Kong ID Card number, name in Chinese and English, date of birth, a contact phone number, a contact e-mail or mailing address and an optional e-mail address to be included in the e-Cert.

replacement of ID card, residents may also opt for the free e-Cert in advance by post, by fax, through HKP's website or in person at Post Offices. For residents who have opted for the free e-Cert in advance, when they visit SIDCCs for ID card replacement, they only need to go to HKP's service counters for identity verification and collection of e-Cert PIN.

#### *e-Cert Issuance*

8. Before HKP generates an e-Cert for an applicant, the computer systems of ImmD and HKP will first check whether the applicant has indeed registered for ID card replacement. Upon confirmation of such, HKP's system will generate an e-Cert for the applicant and send the e-Cert in encrypted form through a secure communication link with end-to-end encryption to ImmD's system for embedment onto the applicant's smart ID card. ImmD will not keep information on those who have opted for the free e-Cert. Nor will it have access to the content of the encrypted e-Cert to be embedded onto the smart ID card. Also, ImmD will not keep copies of the e-Cert after the completion of the embedment process.

9. When an applicant collects his smart ID card at an SIDCC, his e-Cert will have already been embedded onto it. He may then, with the PIN distributed to him earlier, use the e-Cert on his smart ID card for signing or conducting electronic transactions. He may also change his PIN at any time with a computer installed with a smart card reader and software downloadable from HKP's website.

#### *Late Opt-in*

10. The free e-Cert offer is open to all eligible Hong Kong residents throughout the four-year smart ID card replacement exercise. A resident who does not opt for the free e-Cert before the issue of the smart ID card may still opt for it anytime during the four-year period. To cater for these late applicants, computer terminals have been installed at designated Post Offices for processing the application and embedding e-Cert onto these applicants' smart ID cards. The application and embedment processes will be completed on the spot within minutes.

### *Reporting Loss of e-Cert Embedded on Smart ID Card*

11. For those who have lost their e-Cert embedded on smart ID cards, when they visit ImmD's Registration of Persons (ROP) Offices to apply for replacement ID cards, they may report the loss of their e-Cert to HKP at the same time by submitting notification forms in designated drop-in boxes located at the ROP Offices. Alternatively, they may report the loss to HKP direct.

### **Promotion and Publicity Campaign**

12. To raise public awareness of the free e-Cert offer and to encourage the public to opt for it, HKP has put in train a large-scale promotion and publicity campaign to introduce the one-stop opt-in process at SIDCCs, various advance opt-in options, the applications adopting e-Cert and the high level of security offered by e-Cert in conducting electronic transactions.

13. HKP's publicity campaign started in April 2003 with the appointment of celebrities as e-Cert Ambassadors, publication of a question and answer series on e-Cert in a local newspaper, and various marketing collaterals including posters, standees, banners and information leaflets displayed or distributed at Post Offices. Similar marketing collaterals will also be displayed or distributed at HKP's service counters at ImmD's SIDCCs when the smart ID card replacement exercise is launched in August 2003.

14. In the coming months, HKP will intensify its promotion efforts and launch other publicity activities such as announcement in the public interest and commercials on the television and radio; press releases; media interviews; short videos to be shown on bus and in selected Post Offices; advertisements in newspapers, magazines, websites and MTR stations; roving shows in shopping malls; issuance of souvenir covers; and lucky draws.

### **Promotion of Continued Subscription**

15. The validity period of the e-Cert on smart ID card will be three

years. Upon expiry of the first year free use period, smart ID card holders may continue to use the e-Cert after paying the subscription fee. To encourage continued subscription, HKP will, before the one year free use period expires, send reminders by e-mail or by post to e-Cert holders, who will only need to pay for the next two years of service online by credit card in order to keep the e-Cert valid. There is no need for the holders to visit Post Offices. Likewise, before the e-Cert's three-year validity period expires, HKP will send reminders to the holders, who may apply for renewal of e-Cert by visiting one of the designated Post Offices in person or via HKP's websites.

### **Way Forward**

16. The Government will monitor the effectiveness of the one-stop process and the promotion and publicity campaign and will introduce any necessary improvements during the four-year smart ID card replacement exercise to encourage residents to opt for and use the free e-Cert.

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