

民政事務總署
香港灣仔軒尼詩道一百三十號
修頓中心二十九及三十樓



HOME AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

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20 August 2010

Clerk to Panel
Panel on Home Affairs, Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road, Central
Hong Kong
(Attn: Ms Louisa Yeung)

Dear Ms Yeung,

Suggestions on the service of 'e-Stations' in District Offices

Thank you for your letter dated 19 May 2010, enclosing an email from a member of the public, Mr Tsang, expressing views on the service of the 'e-Stations' in the Public Enquiry Service Centres (PESCs) of our District Offices. Mr Tsang had put forth his views to us earlier on and we have replied and explained to him.

The PESCs of our 18 District Offices are responsible for providing the public with information on government services as well as a wide range of services including administering statutory declarations for private use, distributing government publications and forms as well as rendering support services to the Free Legal Advice Scheme operated by the Duty Lawyer Service and the Rent Officer Scheme run by the Rating and Valuation Department.

As part of our PESC's service in providing information of government services to the public, we are operating a simple and cost-effective 'e-Station' system such that there is at least one 'e-Station' linked to a printer at each PESC to facilitate visitors to browse government websites for searching/printing of government information and access to e-government services. Each 'e-Station' is equipped with a 3.5 inches floppy disk drive which aims to enable users to access government e-transaction platforms with their e-certificates. Use of 'e-Stations' is on a first-come first served basis for a duration of 30 minutes and the computer will be automatically logged off after 30 minutes.

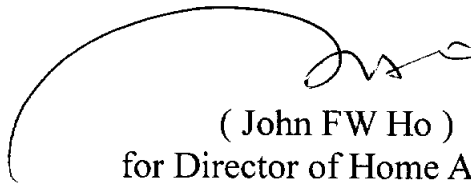
In line with its intent and purposes, the 'e-Stations' are essentially designed to provide basic convenience for the public to obtain government information and are not equipped with applications softwares for word processing or data management and do not support large size files stored in mass storage/multimedia devices such as USB drives.

We understand that Mr. Tsang would wish to see 'e-Stations' to be enhanced to support the use of USB drives. Our major concern about this suggestion is IT security. Presently, computers in government facilities providing full services opened for use by the public are linked up to central server, with centralised firewalls, anti-virus software and other softwares capable of automatically cleaning up the computers after each use, in order to effectively protect the computers. Computers corrupted by virus will cause damage not only to the computers per se but also data/files stored in users' USB drives. Thus, allowing USB drives to be used in the 'e-Stations' without proper protection against virus attacks would expose our system and the users at large to high risk. If USB drives were to be allowed in the 'e-Stations', we would have to set up a centralised system, with firewalls and anti-virus software in

order to effectively protect the 'e-Stations' and the users from virus attack. The capital and recurrent costs on the enhancement, support and virus protection of the 'e-Stations' would be substantial.

Having regard to the primary purpose of "e-Stations" in PESC's and the principle of prudent use of public funds, we consider that the provision of services to the public through 'e-Stations' in PESC's in the current mode is appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John FW Ho', is written over a large, thin, curved line that arches from the left side of the signature area towards the right.

(John FW Ho)
for Director of Home Affairs