

Immigration Department Environmental Report 2002/03

INTRODUCTION

The Immigration Department exercises immigration control at entry points to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, fights immigration-related crimes, issues entry visas, travel documents and identity cards and performs registration of births, deaths and marriages.

On 31 March 2003, there were a total of 5 859 staff members on the establishment of the Department. This compared with 5 702 as at 31 March 2002.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

The Immigration Department is committed to ensuring that all the services delivered by the Department as well as all of our internal operations are conducted in a manner that conformed to environmental protection principles and practices.

ENVIRONMENTAL MEASURES TAKEN IN 2002/03

Electronic Dissemination of Information

The Department committed that we would further make the best use of information technology for both internal office communication and communication with members of the public, not only to speed up the process, but also to contribute to sustaining a green environment. To achieve this target, the Department continued and extended the scope of those measures which had been successfully taken all along and launched a new initiative in promoting the wider use of electronic means for communication with members of the public.

The year 2002/2003 saw the benefit of our iPermit Scheme, which was a new initiative launched on 18 March 2002. Featuring the use of Internet technology, the Scheme enables Taiwan residents to apply for a visit permit and receive an e-notification slip through a travel agency via the Internet. This Scheme not only expedites the application procedures, but also contributes to economy in the use of paper. Up to 31 March 2003, 160 808 iPermit applications were approved.

The Department continued to incorporate the following 5 services under the Electronic Service Delivery (ESD) Scheme to facilitate easy access to our services by members of the public:

- a. applying for search and copy of birth / death / marriage certificates;
- b. booking appointment for registration of identity card;
- c. giving notice of pre-mature termination of employment contracts of imported workers / foreign domestic helpers;
- d. browsing Immigration information; and

- e. booking appointment for giving of marriage notice.

In 2002/2003, a total of 125 690 applications were received for the above 5 types of services under the ESD Scheme. This more than tripled the 37 600 applications received in 2001/2002. Apart from providing the convenience and efficient services to the public, the ESD Scheme is an environmental friendly scheme in that the use of paper can be reduced.

The Immigration Department Homepage on the Internet provides general information on immigration matters, such as procedures for application for travel documents, identity cards, visas and extension of stay. As at 31 March 2003, there were 4 types of e-Forms and a number of information leaflets available for download from the Internet. With such e-Forms and information leaflets on the Internet, members of the public can apply for such services electronically and the use of paper can be minimised. In 2002/2003, the Department developed an Intranet Portal aimed to provide a more effective and efficient channel for exchange of information and provide multi-media information to staff members. The plan was to launch the Intranet Portal in June 2003. Apart from enhancing the communication within the Department, it will also change the conventional method of using paper copies to disseminate information.

Internally, the Department continued to extend the number of Government Office Automation (GOA) workstations to allow more staff members to receive and disseminate information through the Government Communication Network. As at 31 March 2002, there were only 91 GOA workstations. Yet, the number drastically increased by more than 5 times to 467 as at 31 March 2003. This greatly facilitates the exchange of information among our staff members and with other departments through the Intranet and helps reducing hard copies distribution.

Waste Recovery and Recycling of Resources

The Department is in full support of the Government's drive to waste recycling. We encourage recovery of cartridges that are used in the printers of desktop computers. In 2002/2003, a total of 996 emptied cartridges were recovered for collection and refilling by the suppliers of the cartridges or recyclers. This represents a 20 per cent growth in comparison with the 828 cartridges in 2001/2002. This illustrates that our staff members are environmentally conscious and much efforts have been paid in sustaining a greener office.

The Department has a contract for recyclers to collect waste paper from us. As for the rest of our office refuse, there is an express provision in the cleaning contract requiring that sorting must be done to ensure that recyclable waste is properly treated. Waste separation bins for disposal of aluminum cans, plastic bottles and waste paper have been provided at our 4 land border control points since late 2002 for use by members of the public. In Immigration Tower, separate boxes have also been placed on each of our floors to facilitate waste recycling. In 2002/2003, a total of 252 649 kg of used paper was collected and handed over to re-cyclers by this Department.

The Department is a stern supporter of the measure taken by the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department to replace conventional rear tyres of heavy and medium vehicles with retreaded ones in order to reuse resources and lengthen the usable life of tyres. In 2002/2003, the Department had 24 medium-sized vehicles fitted with retreaded tyres. In fact, the Department was quick to make good use of this service provided by the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department as we had 3 vehicles fitted with such tyres when the service was introduced under a pilot scheme in 2001/2002.

Minimisation of Production of Environmental Pollutants or Nuisance

Production of identity cards involves processing of thousands of photographs each day. In 2002/2003, the Department was actively engaged in the smart identity card project so as to produce a more sophisticated and advanced identity card with a number of new features. In the process of making smart identity cards, traditional photographs will be replaced with digital ones. Therefore, the use of chemicals to develop photographs will be discarded. This will help preserve the environment because consumables for developing photographs can be saved and production of chemical waste can be avoided.

The sewerage facilities at the Immigration control points at Sha Tau Kok, Man Kam To and Lok Ma Chau were not designed to cater for the present flow and discharge standards. In 2001, the sewerage system at Sha Tau Kok Control Point was effectively connected to a nearby public sewer and the construction of a new sewage treatment plant at Man Kam To Control Point has also been in operation since 2001. As part of the Lok Ma Chau Control Point Expansion Project, the construction of a new sewage treatment plant was also completed in early 2003. The sewerage facilities at these control points have been greatly improved and production of environmental nuisance has also been minimised.

To tie in with the refinement of the Government Receipt and Despatch Service, the Department reviewed our internal service and rearranged our despatch routes in 2002/2003 with the result that one of our 5 vehicles was taken out of the service. Besides, the Department combined trips whenever possible and encouraged staff to share pool car. These measures aim to minimise the number of trips and reduce fuel consumption.

Environmental friendly fuels, such as unleaded petrol and ultra low sulphur diesel, have been used for our vehicles. Diesel Oxidation Catalyst and Passive Particulate Traps have been installed in one of our diesel vehicles with the assistance of the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department as a trial for the purpose of reducing emission of particulate matters since 2001. The devices aim at a 25 per cent reduction in the emission of particulate matters.

Other Green Housekeeping Measures

In 2002/2003, the Department supported the Government Property Agency's proposal of shortening the air conditioning hours and setting the indoor air temperature at 24°C in Immigration Tower in order to save energy. Internally, the Department also tightened the control on the supply of air conditioning after normal office hours to reduce electricity consumption as far as practicable. As modern air conditioning systems are far more energy-efficient than those installed over 10 years ago, an investment was made by replacing an old air conditioning system with a new one in our East Kowloon Office. A plan was also formulated during the year to replace the old air conditioning systems in our West Kowloon Office and Kowloon Births Registry in 2003-2004.

To save electricity, the Department arranged with the property management company to switch off some of the lifts in Immigration Tower outside normal office hours.

As regards lighting, T8 fluorescent tubes were replaced with T5 fluorescent tubes in those newly renovated offices in 2002/2003 to improve energy efficiency and reduce electricity consumption. The Department also took the initiative to switch off four of the 9 light bulbs installed in each of our 10 lift cars inside our zone in Immigration Tower to save electricity.

Immigration Tower saw a reduction in electricity consumption by 0.45 per cent in 2002/2003 compared with that in 2001/2002. It is not possible to tell how much of this reduction was a contribution made by

this Department, as Immigration Tower is occupied by 8 departments which share the use of 1 electric meter. However, since half of the 48-storey building is occupied by this Department, it is believed that our contribution was considerable. The 0.45 per cent reduction did not come easy, considering that Immigration Tower recorded reduction in electricity consumption for 2 straight financial years from 1999/2000 to 2000/2001. Electricity consumption went up by 0.17 per cent in 2001/2002, but it resumed its downward movement in 2002/2003.

Since saving electricity remains one of our targets, the Department worked closely with the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department in 2002/2003 to review electricity consumption of the Department and identify possible methods to save energy. The Department has been carrying out energy audits at some of our control points with relatively high electricity consumption with a view to identifying ways to enhance energy efficiency and save electricity.

Promotion of Staff Awareness in Green Management

E-mails and circulars were issued periodically on the subject of green management, reminding our staff of the need to be environmentally conscious and providing practical tips and guidelines in order to reduce paper and electricity consumption.

As an on-going effort, environmental audits were carried out to promote staff awareness in environmental protection. In 2002/2003, the Department extended our scope of inspection from 12 items to 38 items so that we could have a more comprehensive environmental auditing. A total of 37 environmental audits were conducted, and they were generally well received by the staff in the offices where the audits took place.

THE WAY FORWARD

Looking ahead, the Department will strive to continue our efforts in conserving our environment. With the implementation of the territory-wide identity card replacement exercise launched in August 2003, consumables for developing conventional photographs will be saved and production of chemical waste will eventually be avoided. This will definitely help sustain a green environment. The Department will also continue to make better use of information technology to reduce paper consumption. A government-wide target has been set for reducing paper consumption and electricity consumption by 2.5 per cent and 1.5 per cent respectively in 2003/2004. In 2003/2004, the Department will conduct a feasibility study in Electronic Records Programme for the conversion of paper records into electronic ones. The Department will also keep up our efforts in promoting green management and exploring other green housekeeping measures in order to contribute to the sustainable development of Hong Kong.

VIEWS AND ENQUIRIES

If you have any views and suggestions regarding this environmental report, please write to our Green Manager at Room 2202A, Immigration Tower, 7 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai or get in touch with us by fax on 2520 0521.