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Better post service for NT villagers

All accessible villages in the New Territories now receive door-to-door mail, a spokesman for the Post Office said yesterday.

Just four years ago, only 31 villages received mail at their door, but now the service has been dramatically increased to 562 villages.

The Controller of Posts in the New Territories, Mr Allan Chiang, yesterday explained some of the problems they had to overcome to get the mail through.

Some house numbers had to be altered because many were duplicated, he said.

This was because of the popularity of some of the numbers in Cantonese, like the number eight, which sounds like the word for prosperity.

Some correspondents still use the old numbering, or

both the old and new, which postmen find confusing.

The extension of the service to rural villages replaced the traditional method of delivery in which letters were placed in a communal box or left at accommodation addresses.

The practice was unreliable and gave no safeguard against the loss of mail.

In the few villages which do not have door deliveries, communal boxes are entrusted to village representatives who act as caretakers.

But they are quite easily broken open by impatient villagers bent on getting their mail quickly.

The caretakers are responsible for collecting and delivering the mail.

Some villagers prefer to use accommodation addresses, usually stores at the entrance to the village. The

drawback to this method is that the storekeeper may not be too concerned about the letters.

Door-to-door delivery is not offered to villages which have been indifferent to the introduction of the new service or to squatter areas with no house numbers.

In these cases, the Post Office encourages villagers to install nests of boxes, like multi-storeyed buildings in urban areas.

The sequential numbering of these boxes helps mail delivery and as the boxes are locked by individual households security is ensured.

Some villagers are not keen on this system, however, as they have to pay for the boxes.

Another problem facing New Territories postmen is vicious dogs which are left to roam and which sometimes prevent them from delivering to houses.

Postmen carry dog repellents, but they are seldom used for fear of angering the villagers.

Two mobile offices are now in operation in the remoter areas of the New Territories dealing with stamps, stationery, postal orders, money orders and registered articles, Mr Chiang said.