

Agitated postmen not satisfied with promotion pledge

By Kris Chan and Chan Bo-shun

ASSURANCES yesterday that the rank of senior postman could soon be created failed to comfort postal workers threatening industrial action against their lack of promotion prospects.

The Postmaster-General, Mr Hugh Ardley, suggested two possible ways of creating such a post.

One would be for senior postmen to assist postal officers in mail sorting work.

"The mechanical electronic sorting system which will be opened in 18 months time could also use some senior postmen", he said.

Mr Ardley was speaking after officiating at the opening ceremony of Telecom Asia '87 yesterday.

Mr Ardley said he would be meeting staff representatives on Friday to discuss the matter and stressed that a final decision had not yet been taken by the Government.

The threat of industrial action first loomed when the Government turned down a request by the 1,300-member Union of Postal Employees (UPE) for the creation of a new senior post for postmen.

They also demanded the in-

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roduction of a long service increment scheme for postmen with more than 18 years of service.

However, the UPE is only one of four unions representing postal workers.

While all four unions agreed that there were no prospects for the promotion of postmen, a rift had developed among them as to whether industrial action should be taken.

The Hongkong Postal Workers Union (HKPWU) has yet to give its support to the idea of industrial action.

The HKPWU's stand is considered vital for the success of the industrial action as the 1,100-member union represents about a third of Hongkong's postmen.

However, only half the UPE's members are postmen. The others are postal officers.

HKPWU chairman Mr Ho Kam-ching said yesterday that he had accepted Mr Ardley's assurance that a senior postman's grade could be created in the near future.

"It would be best for us to have both demands met — the creation of a senior post for postmen and a long service increment.

"But we understand it would be difficult to get both and so if we can get one of our demands met, we would find that acceptable," Mr Ho said.

But UPE chairman, Mr Michael Siu, flatly rejected Mr Ardley's assurances and said his union would still consider taking industrial action.

"We think it is more important to have a long service increment, as the creation of a few senior jobs will not solve the problem totally," he said.

An extra-general meeting of the UPE will be held next Thursday to decide if industrial action should be taken.

A joint meeting of the four unions is to be held two days earlier on whether they should all support the action.