

Afternoons before holidays are peak times at Kai Tak

AFTERNOONS before holidays are peak times when airline passengers may not be cleared at immigration counters within 30 minutes, a government official has said.

Secretary for Security Alistair Asprey told legislators that of 21 complaints lodged from 1991 until now, only five had been kept at immigration counter queues during afternoon peak hours for more than 30 minutes.

He said the Immigration Department was looking into ways to improve peak time backlogs, including deploying more staff and enhancing productivity.

The introduction last month of a Travel Record and Immigration Control and Enforcement System had significantly reduced processing time for arriving Hongkong residents from 90 seconds to a minute.

Departing residents could

be processed within 30 seconds, when previously one minute was needed.

Asprey said a further reduction of processing time for Hongkong residents and holders of machine readable passports could be achieved in 1995 when the optical reader system was introduced.

He said passenger volume at Kai Tak had increased 30 per cent since 1989.

Asprey said that despite the increase in passengers, 94 per cent of arrivals could be cleared within the target 30 minutes.

And 99 per cent of departing passengers could be cleared within the target time.

"The problem, I think, tends to appear just before holidays," he said.

"In peak period during normal days, the target time is still achieved."