

Immigration Clearance Arrangements
during the 2005 Chinese New Year Holidays

Introduction

This Note sets out the overall immigration clearance arrangements at various control points to cope with the anticipated heavy passenger traffic during the 2005 Chinese New Year festive period.

Background

2. Taking into account the statistics and experience over the past years, the Immigration Department (ImmD) predicts that the peak of cross-boundary passenger traffic during the 2005 Chinese New Year festive period will fall between 4 and 17 February 2005.

3. During that period, it is estimated that some eight million passengers (daily average: 572,643) will travel through various control points, reflecting a 15.5% increase over the corresponding figure last year. The majority (72.7%) of passengers is expected to travel by land, with the remainder more or less equally split between air (13.9%) and sea (13.4%) modes.

4. During the festive period, it is estimated that a total of 600,000 Mainland visitors (daily average: 42,857) will visit Hong Kong, representing an 8.3% increase over the figure last year. About half of them are expected to

be visitors under the Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) amounting to 320,000 (daily average: 22,857).

Measures to cope with the heavy traffic

5. Measures implemented or planned to cope with the heavy passenger traffic during the 2005 Chinese New Year festive period are set out below.

Redeployment of Staff

6. Over 220 immigration staff will be redeployed to reinforce various control points during the festive period. In addition, a standby Emergency Response Team comprising about 80 immigration staff has been established to deal with surges in traffic in busier control points on an urgent and spontaneous basis.

7. Adequately reinforced as explained above, we believe the great majority of the immigration clearance counters at control points will be operated to deal with the dominant flow during peak hours. For the Lok Ma Chau Control Point, which is likely to be very crowded during the festive period, all the 50 clearance counters will be operated when necessary.

Diversion of Traffic

8. To alleviate the burden of the Lok Ma Chau Control Point, the ImmD has advised group tour operators to arrange Mainland tour groups to cross the boundary through the Lo Wu Control Point which has a larger handling capacity, as well as to space out the arrival of groups and make

better reception plans.

E-channels

9. Six additional e-channels (self-service immigration clearance channels) will be installed at the Lo Wu Control Point, increasing the total number of e-channels there from three to nine.

Joint Command Centre

10. The inter-departmental Joint Command Centre will be activated to closely monitor the passenger traffic and to ensure seamless co-ordination of operations at different land boundary control points.

Coordination with the Shenzhen Side

11. Departments including the ImmD, the Police and the Customs and Exercise Department have discussed with the relevant Shenzhen authorities the estimated passenger flow and traffic pattern at land boundary control points. Both sides will enhance on-site communication and take coordinated measures to ease the flow of passengers.

Dissemination of Information

12. The ImmD held a press conference on 3 February 2005 to announce the arrangements at control points during the festive period and to advise the public to avoid crossing the boundary during peak hours. To better inform the public on the condition of individual control points, the

ImmD will disseminate the daily passenger statistics to the mass media through the Information Services Department and upload the daily arrival statistics on its website. Such information will also be hyperlinked to the Hong Kong Tourism Board's homepage and a joint website by the Mainland and Macau tourism authorities for visitors' reference.

Immigration Department

3 February 2005