

For information  
on 17 January 2006

**Legislative Council  
Panel on Commerce and Industry**

**A Review of the Logistics Aspects of  
the Sixth Ministerial Conference of  
the World Trade Organization**

**PURPOSE**

This note reviews the logistics aspects of the Sixth Ministerial Conference (MC6) of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

**DATE AND VENUES**

2. MC6 was held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) from 13 to 18 December 2005. It officially started at 3:00 pm on 13 December when the Inaugural Session was held and ended shortly before midnight on 18 December after the Closing Session.

**OUTCOME AND ASSESSMENT**

3. Overall, MC6 was conducted smoothly as planned. Despite the attempts to derail the Conference by some protesters and some confrontations with the Police, the conduct of the Conference was not affected. The delegates, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as the press all commended the good organization of the Conference. The Director-General of the WTO, Mr Pascal Lamy, even described the logistical arrangements for MC6 as 'perfect'.

4. A review of the more significant logistics aspects is described below.

**(A) Security and Accreditation**

Accreditation

5. In accordance with the practice of WTO Ministerial Conferences (MCs), accreditation badges were required for access to the MC6 venue. These badges were distributed at the Accreditation Centre set up on the ground floor of

the Hong Kong Central Library during 8-18 December. Over 11 300 persons were accredited by the WTO Secretariat for attending MC6. Eventually a total of 10 313 persons (comprising 5 786 delegates, 2 931 press and 1 596 representatives of NGOs) collected their accreditation badges. In addition, around 10 000 staff of the Government and supporting agencies were also accredited to provide logistics support to the Conference. The accreditation and collection process was conducted smoothly. The access control system operated by the Police at the designated entrances of HKCEC was strictly enforced and worked seamlessly with the accreditation system, thus ensuring the necessary security control.

#### Setting up of a Closed Area

6. A Closed Area around the vicinity of HKCEC was set up by way of the Closed Area (Hong Kong Ministerial Conference of World Trade Organization) Order under section 36 of the Public Order Ordinance (Cap. 245) from 6:00 pm on 12 December to 5:00 am on 19 December 2005. Only holders of accreditation badges issued by the Ministerial Conference Coordination Office (MCO) as well as individuals with the permission of the Commissioner of Police could enter or leave the Closed Area during the specified period. The Police ensured the Closed Area was kept clear of unauthorized persons at all times, by way of physical barriers on the land side and patrol of marine launches on the sea side; and successfully resisted various attempts by some protesters to enter the Closed Area. The Closed Area arrangement was effective in ensuring the conduct of MC6 was not disturbed by the activities of some protesters.

#### Areas for Demonstration and NGO Activities

7. The policing mission for MC6 was three-fold: (a) to provide for a safe and uninterrupted Conference; (b) to endeavour to facilitate as far as possible all peaceful demonstrations; and (c) to protect the rights and freedoms of others. To achieve the above, the Government maintained liaison with local and overseas NGO representatives throughout the preparation of MC6 and also held regular briefings for local NGO representatives during the Conference period to provide updates on both the logistics and substance aspects of MC6.

8. Similar to past WTO MCs, there were a substantial number of demonstrations against the WTO during the MC6 period. The Police estimates that some 4 000 overseas and 2 500 local protesters took part in the various demonstrations/processions. The local body coordinating these demonstration activities was the Hong Kong People's Alliance on WTO. The major demonstrations were mounted by overseas protesters, most notably Korean farmers and Asian migrant workers.

9. The Police and MCO had earlier identified Wan Chai Public Cargo Working Area (WCPCWA) and Wan Chai Sports Ground as designated public activity areas (DPAAs). In the end, Wan Chai Sports Ground was not used, as the number of demonstrators was smaller than expected and WCPCWA was sufficient to accommodate the demonstrators. The Victoria Park was largely used by NGOs and protest groups as the starting point for processions and for holding various public activities like cultural performances and discussions. The Southorn Playground was also reserved for the conduct of public activities apart from demonstrations but in the end no organization used this facility.

10. In the course of MC6, arrangements were made for the facilitation and policing of some 105 separate demonstration activities. Only eight of them, which occurred on 13, 14, 16 and 17 of December, involved an element of disturbance. Five of these took place outside the WCPCWA at the Police cordon line along Hung Hing Road, two involved small-scale disorderly activities at the South Korean and US Consular premises respectively, and one involved more widespread disturbance in Wan Chai and required an escalation of Police response.

11. The disturbance on 17 December led to the closure of all the approach roads to HKCEC, roads in the Wan Chai area, as well as the southbound tube of the Cross Harbour Tunnel (CHT) and the northbound tube of the Aberdeen Tunnel. In order to ensure the continued provision of transport to and from HKCEC, a contingency waterborne transport service from Central to HKCEC was provided by the Host Government for delegates from around 6:00 pm to past midnight on 17 December. This service enabled delegations, including those of the European Union and Japan, to reach HKCEC in time to attend the Heads of Delegation meeting. It also enabled delegates to leave HKCEC on 17 December. From the early hours of 18 December and until the roads in the Wan Chai area reopened, limited ground transportation feeder services were provided for delegates. The contingency transport services were highly commended by delegates as it prevented the Conference from being sabotaged by disturbances and resultant road closures outside the venue.

12. The Panel on Security will discuss the security arrangements of MC6 at its meeting to be held on 7 February 2006. The Administration will explain the matter to members of the Panel in detail.

### **(B) Traffic and Transport**

13. Apart from the road closures necessitated by the disturbance caused by some protesters on 17 December, the traffic conditions in the Wan Chai area were by and large smooth and orderly throughout the MC6 period, notwithstanding the conduct of a number of processions and the presence of a

significant number of MC6-related vehicles moving in and out of HKCEC. The designation of 13 December (i.e. first day of MC6) as a discretionary school holiday/staff development day proved to be effective in relieving traffic in the Wan Chai area, as well as the whole Hong Kong Island. Some 95% of schools in Wan Chai (which together have over 30 000 students) and over 60% of schools in Hong Kong Island (which together have around 110 000 students) took heed of Government's advice and did not have normal school day on 13 December.

14. In addition, MCO implemented a number of measures to encourage delegates to arrive early at HKCEC on 13 December for the Inaugural Session at 3:00 pm and to avoid a potential bunching of road traffic to HKCEC just before this Session. Such measures included inviting heads of delegations and ministers to a lunch at HKCEC, stopping the shuttle bus services for delegates around an hour and a half before the Inaugural Session, laying on various attractions inside HKCEC (e.g. light cultural performances and guided tours of HKCEC), etc.

15. For MC6, the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau (ETWB), together with the Transport Department (TD), the Police and the Highways Department (HyD), jointly worked out a number of traffic management measures to help reduce road traffic in the Causeway Bay-Wan Chai area and to divert traffic away from CHT. For instance, the franchisees of the Western Harbour Crossing and Eastern Harbour Crossing provided concessions on tolls for private cars, taxis and goods vehicles during the Conference period. In addition, TD disseminated gearing up messages through the media before the event on possible traffic congestions during MC6. During the Conference period, TD's Emergency Transport Coordination Centre monitored the traffic situation 24 hours daily, and worked closely with the Police, other Government Departments, public transport operators and tunnel operators to handle transport matters. TD also disseminated detailed information on special traffic arrangements to the public on a daily basis during the Conference period through various channels, including daily press briefings and live interviews on the electronic media, a special MC6 hotline, latest traffic information on TD's website, etc. These measures were very effective, as manifested by motorists refraining from driving to the Wan Chai area, thereby reducing the road traffic load in this area during MC6.

16. The road closures in the Wan Chai area necessitated by the disturbance caused by some protesters on 17 December seriously affected the traffic on Hong Kong Island, particularly during the evening hours. Based on a contingency plan jointly developed by ETWB, TD, Police and HyD to deal with gridlocks within the Wan Chai area, access roads to Wan Chai as well as the southbound tube of CHT and northbound tube of the Aberdeen Tunnel were closed in phases from about 5:00 pm on 17 December. They were reopened

gradually from 6:15 am onwards on 18 December with the final re-opening of Gloucester Road at about 3:00 pm. Congestion was reported in various parts of Hong Kong Island and South Kowloon in the evening hours of 17 December before a gradual easing off as the night progressed. Road public transport services were either truncated or diverted away from Wan Chai from around 5:00 pm on 17 December and gradually resumed normal operation the following day upon the re-opening of the roads. During the affected period, a special bus route was put into operation between Central and Southern District and off-street public transport services such as MTR and ferry services were strengthened to cater for passenger demand. The general public was kept informed of all road closures and transport arrangements through various channels. In addition, TD increased the number of ports for the special hotline from 100 to 168 at around 7:00 pm on 17 December to cater for the sudden upsurge in demand.

17. Some commentators suggest the coverage of the road closures on 17 December was excessive and unnecessarily affected the general public. We do not agree with this view. Because of the disturbance caused by some protestors, traffic along Gloucester Road, a key east-west artery on Hong Kong Island, had already come to a complete standstill. As the duration of the disturbance and the security implications could not be known at the time of disturbance, it was necessary to stop vehicles from entering the Wan Chai area, lest the traffic situation should further deteriorate. Through the joint efforts of the Police, TD and HyD, the gridlock at Wan Chai was contained and dealt with efficiently. Moreover, during the road closure period, the east-west access on Hong Kong Island was maintained by the MTR with enhanced services, and bus services for the Southern District were also strengthened. Notwithstanding the closure of southbound tube of CHT, transport services between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon South was maintained by both the MTR and ferry.

### **(C) Contingency Planning and Coordination Within the Government**

18. Considerable efforts were made before MC6 by MCO and all concerned bureaux and departments to plan for any foreseeable contingencies and to ensure that there was close coordination with one another and with all outside agencies. These efforts proved effective.

19. Security Bureau (SB) took the lead in setting up a multi-agency coordination and response mechanism, namely the Multi-Agency Coordination Centre (MACC), during MC6. MACC operated from 10 to 19 December on a 24-hour basis. Bureaux and departments made extensive use of its electronic information system for sharing real-time information. MACC also used the information to keep senior officials informed of developments during the period. SB is now collecting feedback from users of the MACC system for future reference.

## **(D) Preparation of the Private Sector and the Community**

20. MCO and the Police conducted extensive publicity in the latter half of 2005 to brief the private sector and the community on what actions should be taken to prepare themselves for MC6. Over 70 briefings for business enterprises and the general public were held. A pamphlet on MC6 was distributed extensively to the general public, visitors, business enterprises in Wan Chai and all schools in Hong Kong. Most business operators, particularly those in the Wan Chai area, took heed of Government's advice and implemented various measures, such as stepping up patrol, installing additional/temporary protective devices (e.g. rolling shutters, wooden panels), and staying alert for cyber attacks, etc. The general public also took note of the special arrangements in respect of traffic and provision of public services at the government offices in Wan Chai North during the MC6 period.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial and Civil Service Implications**

21. The Finance Committee of LegCo approved in May 2004 a budget of \$256 million for the hosting of MC6. To help defray part of the costs and to engage the active involvement of the community in this event, MCO solicited and obtained from a number of business corporations substantial sponsorship, in cash and in kind, totaling about \$55 million. While the accounts are being finalised, we are reasonably confident that we can deliver MC6 below budget.

22. To meet the manpower requirement for the logistics operation of MC6, we have taken the following measures: (a) seconded some 50 officers from various departments to work in MCO since August, (b) engaged some 750 civil servants to undertake various duties before and during the MC6 period (e.g. as Liaison Officers for WTO member delegations); (c) appointed another 400 volunteers to underpin the civil servants mentioned in (b) above; and (d) recruited about 240 language helpers (including students) to provide language support in French and Spanish which, in addition to English, are the official languages of WTO. We are very satisfied with the overall performance of the seconded civil servants and outside helpers.

### **Economic Implications**

23. The number of MC6 participants was quite close to the original estimation and it is estimated that they contributed about \$100 million in terms of tourist receipts to Hong Kong. Some overseas visitors might have been discouraged from coming to Hong Kong during the MC6 period by the prospect of congestion and commotion, but most of these "lost" trips would likely be

rescheduled before or after the event. According to the latest figures, the total number of visitor arrivals decreased by about 0.5% for the period 11-20 December as compared with the same period last year, while the total arrivals for the month of December rose 5.5% as compared with the same period last year.

24. The main value of hosting MC6 is the enhancement Hong Kong's status in the international community. The logistics organization of MC6 is widely acknowledged by the WTO, the delegates, the press and the NGO representatives as a success. For a period of about two weeks, Hong Kong was widely reported in the international media. With the successful hosting of MC6, we have demonstrated to the world Hong Kong's strengths and its capability to organize large-scale international events, whilst allowing free expressions of dissent and keeping public disturbances to a minimum. The success of MC6 may help attract more international conferences and gatherings to Hong Kong.

25. The demonstrations during the MC6 period, in particular the disturbance on 17 December, deterred the public from patronizing shops and restaurants in the Wan Chai area. We deeply appreciate the understanding demonstrated by the businesses in the Wan Chai and Causeway Bay areas. With the support from different stakeholders, the Government and the Hong Kong Tourism Board have introduced a series of measures shortly after MC6 to stimulate visits to and consumption in Wan Chai and Causeway Bay.

### **Other Implications**

26. The security and transport arrangements during MC6, including diversion of traffic routes and suspension of transport services in the vicinity of HKCEC caused inconvenience to the general public. The disturbance on 17 December, in particular, practically stalled public activities there. However, the general public was generally appreciative of the Government's action in allowing processions to go ahead and protesters to express their views freely. The public commended the Police's conduct in maintaining public order when the situation so warranted.

27. For the Government, the hosting of an international event of the scale of MC6 provided valuable experience and lessons for future reference. Among other things, it demonstrated that concerted efforts of all Government bureaux and departments are essential for the success of events of this kind. It has raised awareness among bureaux and departments of the need for contingency planning, and provided an opportunity for all of them to thoroughly review and update their contingency plans. It has drawn departments more closely together than before and hammered home the importance of inter-departmental cooperation. The Police also gained valuable experience in handling large-scale

and violent demonstrations. The preparation and conduct of MC6 has enabled the Government to be better prepared for future challenges.

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

28. We briefed the Panel on Commerce and Industry (C&I) of LegCo on 16 November 2004, 15 February, 19 July and 18 October 2005; the Panel on Transport on 25 November 2005; and the Panel on Security on 3 May and 6 December 2005. In addition to the briefing for Chairmen and Vice-chairmen of all District Councils, we briefed the five most concerned District Councils (namely Wan Chai, Central & Western, Eastern, Yau Tsim Mong and Kowloon City). MCO and the Police conducted over 70 briefings for the community and business sector. TD also briefed representatives of all public transport trades.

## **PUBLICITY**

29. The objective of the PR plan for MC6 was two-fold: (a) to explain the objectives of the Conference (including the role of the WTO and the background of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA)); and (b) to win public support for the Conference and to seek its understanding with regard to the inconvenience brought by the special security and traffic arrangements.

30. Against this background, an intensive publicity and PR campaign was launched locally before the Conference through press briefings, newspaper and electronic media interviews, phone-in programmes, media workshops, media partnership projects, press releases, feature articles, TV/radio APIs, students design competitions etc. Appeals for public tolerance of the likely inconvenience were reinforced with the approach of the Conference. During the Conference period, the public was kept abreast of the latest situation through daily and ad hoc press briefings and press releases.

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