

For information

Legislative Council Panel on Security

**Immigration Clearance for Visitors
at Land Boundary Control Points
– passenger traffic and mitigating measures**

Introduction

This paper aims to brief Members on the immigration clearance situation for Mainland visitors at land boundary control points during the National Day festive period and set out the mitigating measures taken by the Immigration Department (ImmD).

Background

2. The number of cross-boundary trips made by Mainland visitors increased substantially in recent years: from 31.23 million in 2007 to 36.09 million in 2009 (+ 15.6%), the number of which travelled by land rose from 23.35 million to 29.12 million (+ 24.7%). For the first ten months of this year, Mainland visitors made a total of 38.03 million cross-boundary trips to Hong Kong, of which 30.72 million were by land. The number of trips made by Mainland visitors using the various land boundary control points for the first ten months this year is set out below:

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| Railway - Lo Wu | 12.68 million |
| Lok Ma Chau Spur Line | 4.08 million |
| Hung Hom | 0.96 million |
| Others - Lok Ma Chau | 6.71 million |
| Shenzhen Bay | 5.62 million |
| Sha Tau Kok | 0.44 million |
| Man Kam To | 0.23 million |

3. ImmD has all along strived to provide efficient immigration clearance service to visitors; ImmD pledges that 95% of the visitors using land boundary control points can have their clearance completed within 30 minutes. In 2009, 99.6% of arriving visitors travelling by land were cleared within 30 minutes. All land boundary control points were able to meet the performance pledge even during the National Day festive period last year and the Labour Day Golden Week this year.

Clearance Situation during the National Day Festive Period

4. During the National Day festive period (1 to 7 October) this year, Mainland visitors made 1.34 million cross-boundary trips (an increase by 24.1% as compared with last year), of which 1.09 million were by land. The details are set out below:

| Land Boundary Control Points ^{Note} | | Total number of passengers (including Hong Kong Residents and Visitors) | Number of Visitors (of which Mainland Visitors) | Percentage of visitors completing immigration clearance within 30 minutes |
|--|-----------------------|---|---|---|
| Rail— | Lo Wu | 1 840 000 | 510 000 (470 000) | 85.2 % |
| | Lok Ma Chau Spur Line | 600 000 | 170 000 (160 000) | 96.5 % |
| | Hung Hom | 70 000 | 50 000 (30 000) | 99.6 % |
| Lok Ma Chau | | 640 000 | 210 000 (190 000) | 98.2 % |
| Shenzhen Bay | | 500 000 | 260 000 (220 000) | 96.7 % |
| Sha Tau Kok | | 60 000 | 20 000 (20 000) | 100.0 % |
| Total | | 3 710 000 | 1 220 000 (1 090 000) | 96.6 % |

^{Note} To tie-in with the improvement works for the passenger clearance area, passenger clearance service at the Shenzhen Wenjindu Port has basically been closed from 22 February 2010. Notwithstanding, special arrangements were made to provide clearance service to cross-boundary students and visitors using designated cross-boundary coach service, and the number of cross-boundary passengers is negligible.

As illustrated in the table above, all land boundary control points except Lo Wu were able to meet the performance pledge.

5. Lo Wu Control Point (LWCP) was the busiest land boundary control point. During the National Day festive period this year, 49.5% of all land boundary passengers used LWCP to cross the boundary. The number of Mainland visitors (0.47 million) increased by about 20% as compared with the National Day festive period last year (0.39 million), and about 70% as compared with ordinary days. During the National Day holidays, as much as 40% to 50% of the Mainland visitors entered Hong Kong between 8.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon, rendering the immigration clearance service not meeting the performance pledge during the peak periods of passenger traffic.

Mitigating Measures

6. Since the commissioning of the Shenzhen Bay and the Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Points in 2007, there has been divergent effects for the passenger flow using busy control points such as LWCP. To cope with increased passenger traffic during festive periods, ImmD has all along adopted a number of mitigating measures to meet the demand.

7. Firstly, ImmD would step up publicity before festive periods and encourage visitors to avoid using cross-boundary service during peak hours. To ensure effective delivery of such message, ImmD also spreads such message through local as well as Mainland media (including Xinhua News Agency, China News Service, i-Phoenix, Phoenix Satellite TV and People's Daily).

8. During the National Day festive period, the joint command centre with members comprising representatives from ImmD and other relevant Government departments (including the Police, Customs & Excise Department, Transport Department) and the Mass Transit Railway Corporation would come into operation to monitor passenger traffic. ImmD would deploy more frontline staff according to the prevailing passenger traffic, and suitably arrange staff to work overtime to enhance service.

9. In the long run, ImmD would enhance its automatic system and strengthen the handling capacity of its control points. To tie in with the plan of the Mainland authorities to issue, from 2012 by phases, electronic “Exit-Entry Permits for Travelling to and from Hong Kong and Macao” (e-EEP) to Mainland residents, ImmD has secured funding approval from the Finance Committee this July for upgrading its computer system and installing facilities for enabling Mainland visitors using e-EEP to go through immigration clearance. The system will also enable frequent visitors from the Mainland to enjoy efficient clearance service through e-Channels following enrollment.

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