

For information
on 3 July 2012

Legislative Council Panel on Security

**Service Enhancement Initiatives on
the Automated Passenger Clearance System (e-Channel)**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the latest enhancement initiatives on the Automated Passenger Clearance System (e-Channel).

Background

2. The e-Channel service was introduced by the Immigration Department (“ImmD”) in December 2004 for eligible Hong Kong residents who have attained the age of 11 or above. Thereafter, the ImmD has continuously extended the e-Channel service –

- (a) since December 2007, the e-Channel service has been extended to cross-boundary students under the age of 11 at Lo Wu Control Point;
- (b) from May 2008, eligible frequent visitors may use e-Channels at Hong Kong International Airport after enrolment;
- (c) since March 2009, the Express e-Channel service was launched at Lo Wu Control Point for those Hong Kong residents aged 18 or above after enrolment¹; and
- (d) from December 2009 onwards, eligible Macao permanent residents may use e-Channel service at Macao Ferry Terminal

¹ The clearance time of Express e-Channels can be shortened by 4 seconds as compared with that of normal resident e-Channels.

and China Ferry Terminal after enrolment (In July 2011, the e-Channel service would be further extended to Tuen Mun Ferry Terminal).

3. At present, the ImmD has put in place 391 e-Channels in 11 control points and details are at **Annex**. Passengers using the e-Channel service accounted for almost a half (47.6%) of the passenger traffic over the last 12 months from June 2011 to May 2012.

Latest Developments

4. The number of Mainland visitors to Hong Kong significantly increased over the years. In July 2010, \$240 million was approved by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for ImmD to upgrade its computer systems to facilitate the provision of e-Channel service to holders of Exit-Entry Permit (“EEP”) and related services. The first phase of the scheme was to provide e-Channel service to eligible Mainland visitors² who hold the booklet EEP. As at 31 May 2012, more than 200 000 eligible Mainland frequent visitors have enrolled for the e-Channel service. It is anticipated that electronic EEP (“e-EEP”) will be issued by the Mainland authorities in 2013. The e-EEP is embedded with a computer chip containing the holder’s personal particulars and exit endorsement to Hong Kong. To tie in with the implementation of e-EEP, the ImmD is in close contact with Mainland authorities to extend e-Channel service to Mainland visitors in order to enhance the clearance efficiency at control points.

5. The ImmD is conducting a feasibility study on a new generation of Immigration Control System. The scope of the study covers, among other areas, setting up an effective platform in support of extension of e-Channel service and the feasibility of deploying facial recognition technology to further enhance e-Channel security and detection of forgeries. The study is expected to be completed before the third quarter

² An eligible mainland visitor refers to one who is 18 years old or above; holds valid one-year multiple exit endorsement (Visit Relatives, Individual Visit or Business Visit); has visited Hong Kong 3 times or more within the last 12 months immediate before the date of enrolment; and has no adverse record in Hong Kong.

of 2012. The ImmD will carefully consider the recommendations of the study and will also report the outcome to the Panel and seek approval on funding arrangements in due course.

Other Facilitation Measures on Immigration Clearance

6. Based on the principle of reciprocity, the HKSAR Government will further streamline the entry arrangements for Taiwan residents by allowing them to make online prior entry registration on their own. Starting from 1 September this year, eligible Taiwan residents (i.e. visitors who are born in Taiwan or have visited Hong Kong as Taiwan residents) may make prior entry registration, free of charge, at the website managed by the ImmD. The registrants will be notified of the result instantly, and may come to Hong Kong with self-printed valid notification slip and valid travel document issued by the Taiwan authorities. Such visitors will be given permission to land if normal immigration requirements are met. Same as the existing arrangement for iPermit issued through authorised agents, Taiwan residents with completed prior entry registration may enter Hong Kong twice during the two-month validity period, with a stay of 30 days on each entry. The ImmD is currently at the final stage of enhancement and testing, and will announce the details as soon as possible.

7. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Security Bureau

June 2012

**Number of e-Channels at Various Control Points
(31 May 2012)**

Control Point	Number
Lo Wu	125
Lok Ma Chau Spur Line	70
Shenzhen Bay	36
Lok Ma Chau	20 ^(Note 1)
Hung Hom	10
Man Kam To	9 ^(Note 2)
Sha Tau Kok	6
Airport	41
Macau Ferry Terminal	46
China Ferry Terminal	22
Tuen Mun Ferry Terminal	6
Total	391

Note 1: The improvement works at Lok Ma Chau Control Points will be completed in 2013. Upon completion of the works, the number of e-Channels will be increased from 20 to 43.

Note 2: The improvement works at Man Kam To Control Points will be completed in late 2012. Upon completion of the works, the number of e-Channels will be increased from 9 to 18.