

For discussion

## **Legislative Council Panel on Security**

### **Implementation of the New Obstetric Service Arrangements and Complementary Immigration Measures**

#### **Introduction**

This paper provides an update on the new obstetric service arrangements and complementary immigration measures that have been put in place by the Government and the Hospital Authority (HA) since 1 February 2007.

#### **Background**

2. LC Paper No. CB(2)1130/06-07(01) issued to the LegCo Panels on Health Services and Security on 21 February 2007 reported on details of the relevant arrangements and measures. These arrangements and measures have so far achieved their objectives, namely to (a) ensure that local pregnant women are given proper obstetric services and priority to use such services; (b) limit the number of non-local pregnant women coming to Hong Kong to give births to a level that can be supported by our healthcare system; and (c) deter dangerous behaviour of non-local pregnant women in seeking emergency hospital admissions through Accident and Emergency Departments (A&EDs) shortly before labour.

3. The booking systems for obstetric services in both public and private hospitals have been working smoothly so far. Coupled with the complementary immigration measures, they have given hospitals the means to control the total number of their non-local obstetric patients to a level that they can support. The number of hospital admissions through A&ED has dropped significantly. Moreover, the HA is able to focus more of its resources to the needs of local pregnant women. The relevant statistics for the first twelve weeks since 1 February (up to 25 April) are as follows -

	<b>Daily Average</b>	<b>Compared with January 2007</b>	<b>Compared with February and March 2006</b>
Births in public hospitals by non-local women	18.2	- 35.5%	- 38.1%
Non-local pregnant women sought admission through A&EDs	5.3	- 70.2%	- 78.2%

### **Complementary Immigration Measures**

4. On the immigration front, all the complementary measures have achieved their intended purposes, and their implementation has been smooth.

5. Enhanced arrival checking has been applied on all pregnant visitors. From 1 February to 16 April 2007, the Immigration Department (ImmD) has invited a total of 5 950 pregnant visitors<sup>1</sup> for secondary examination upon landing. Among these visitors, 264 (or 4%) were refused entry and all of them returned to their place of origin on a voluntarily basis. Most of the pregnant visitors were found to be aware of the relevant requirements.

6. Upon the implementation of enhanced arrival checking, the number of extension of stay (ES) applications by pregnant visitors has dropped as illustrated below-

2007	<b>ES Applications made by pregnant visitors</b>
January	3 122
February	1 726
March	1 667
April (up to 16 April)	860

Most of the applications are made on the ground that the visitors are medically not fit for traveling. ImmD has not detected any signs of irregularities. The number

<sup>1</sup> "Pregnant visitors" mean visitors who are at an advanced stage of pregnancy. Pregnancy of seven months (28 weeks) or longer is deemed to be advanced stage of pregnancy.

of pregnant overstayers or pregnant illegal immigrants has remained insignificant. Among the 5 686 pregnant visitors who were granted entry since 1 February 2007, only nine have overstayed. From 1 February to 17 April 2007, nine illegal immigrants were pregnant women<sup>2</sup>, compared with the monthly average of three in 2006. ImmD will continue to monitor the situation.

7. The law enforcement agencies (LEAs) are aware that some intermediaries are arranging non-local pregnant women to come to Hong Kong for child delivery (so called “all-in-one maternity service package”). Such an arrangement does not necessarily involve illegal activities. While the LEAs have been monitoring the situation, there is also so far no indication of any syndicated activities seeking to arrange illegal immigrants or overstayers to give birth in Hong Kong. The LEAs will continue to monitor the situation and take measures where necessary.

## **Conclusion**

8. We will continue to ensure effective immigration measures to support the new obstetric service arrangements.

Security Bureau  
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<sup>2</sup> These pregnant women may not be at an advanced stage of pregnancy.