For discussion at the
Meeting on 6 January 2009

Panel on Security of the Legislative Council

Pilot Scheme on Express e-Channel

Purpose

        This paper informs Members of the launching of the pilot scheme on Express e-Channels.

Background

2   At present, we have installed 361 e-Channels at various immigration control points. A breakdown of the facilities by location is at <u>Annex A</u>. The e-Channel service (Automated Passenger Clearance System) has been well received by the public. Among the Hong Kong residents crossing the boundary control points, around 80% use the service.

3.   When it was launched in 2004, the e-Channel service was provided for use by Hong Kong permanent residents (HKPRs). In view of the positive response of HKPRs to the service and the continual growing number of visitors to Hong Kong (figures at <u>Annex B</u>), we introduced the Immigration (Amendment) Bill into the Legislative Council in 2005 to allow the extension of the service to non-permanent residents and frequent visitors. The extension came into effect in January 2006.

4.   Since May 2008, we have extended the service to frequent visitors aged 18 or above[1]. We have installed ten e-Channels for use by frequent visitors at the Hong Kong International Airport. Up to end of

---

[1]   Frequent visitors are allowed to use the service on enrolment. At present, the Immigration Department provides enrolment service for those who hold a valid Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Travel Pass, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Business Travel Card with the economy code "HKG" or Hong Kong International Airport Frequent Visitor Card. Enrolment offices are set up at the Hong Kong International Airport to process applications from frequent visitors.

November 2008, about 11 000 visitors have enrolled for the service[2]. We will continue to promote the service to frequent visitors coming to Hong Kong.

5.　　　　Also, as announced in the 2008-09 Policy Address, new travel convenience measures between Hong Kong and Macao will be introduced from the second half of 2009. One of the measures is that we will allow enroled Macao permanent residents to use e-Channels at our control points. The Macao authorities will provide similar convenience to Hong Kong permanent residents.

Pilot Scheme on Express e-Channel

6.　　　　At present, a Hong Kong resident using e-Channel service needs to insert his Hong Kong smart identity card into a card reader. The system will verify the fingerprint captured by the scanner on the spot against the fingerprint template stored in the chip of the smart identity card (which is a string of binary digits and are irreversible to fingerprint images). Currently the clearance time involving traditional e-Channels is around 12 seconds.

7.　　　　We plan to launch a pilot scheme on "Express e-Channels" with a view to further enhancing the efficiency of the service. At an Express e-Channel, the fingerprint captured by the scanner will be verified against the fingerprint template stored in a back-end server instead of the chip of a smart identity card. Since retrieving information from a back-end server is faster, this will shorten the processing time by about four seconds.

8.　　　　We will seek the consent of data subjects, through a voluntary, self-serviced enrolment procedure, for the transfer of the relevant data from smart identity cards to back-end servers for storage. The enrolment will be done through designated e-Channels. When a passenger inserts his identity card into the card reader at a designated e-Channel, the passenger will be invited to give his consent regarding the transfer and storage of his personal data. The relevant data, which are already embedded in the chip of the Hong Kong smart identity card (i.e. Hong Kong identity card number, name, sex, date of birth, date of registration of the identity card, status of Hong Kong residency and fingerprint templates), will then be transferred via a closed and secure

---

[2]　Over 40 000 uses of e-Channels by visitors have been recorded since the provision of e-Channel service to visitors in May 2008.

network to back-end servers for storage. All the back-end servers are installed at computer rooms purpose-built in compliance with the relevant security requirements. Only authorised officers (of the rank of Immigration Officer or above) can gain access to the data at designated computer terminals. The system will keep records of all access to the database for security auditing. Moreover, our computer system has intrusion detection system to prevent hacking and intrusion.

9.	We have consulted the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data. The arrangements in respect of the obtaining of consent of data subjects and the protection of data are in compliance with the personal data protection principles under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance.

10.	We intend to commence the pilot scheme on Express e-Channels in February 2009 at the Lo Wu Control Point by installing ten enrolment e-Channels and ten Express e-Channels. A publicity campaign will be launched shortly. The Immigration Department will set up overhead display boards and sign-posts to indicate clearly the locations of the enrolment e-Channels and Express e-Channels. The Department will also make available leaflets, posters and video display explaining the enrolment process and the data to be retrieved and stored. Staff will be deployed to assist users in enroling for and using Express e-Channels. We will review the experience of the pilot scheme in the second half of 2009.

Advice Sought

11.	Members are invited to note the content of the paper.

Security Bureau
December 2008

Number of Passenger e-Channels by Control Point

Control Point	Number of Passenger e-Channels
Airport	41*
China Ferry Terminal	18
Hung Hom	10
Lok Ma Chau	20
Lok Ma Chau Spurline	70
Lo Wu	110#
Macao Ferry Terminal	42
Man Kam To	9
Shenzhen Bay	29
Sha Tau Kok	6
Tuen Mun Ferry Terminal	6
Total	361

*including 10 e-Channels for frequent visitors

including 6 e-Channels for cross boundary students

Total Number of Visitors (Arrival & Departure)

Year	Visitors (year-on-year difference)
1998	20 356 456
1999	22 705 312 (+11.5%)
2000	26 139 760 (+15.1%)
2001	27 476 645 (+5.1%)
2002	33 064 440 (+20.3%)
2003	31 122 729 (-5.9%)
2004	43 657 176 (+40.3%)
2005	46 741 368 (+7.1%)
2006	50 516 904 (+8.1%)
2007	56 329 938 (+11.5%)
2008 (Jan-Nov)	53 545 105 (+ 5.4%)*

* The total number of visitors (arrival and departure) in January to November 2008 was 5.4% more than that of the same period in 2007.