# 立法會
# *Legislative Council*

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**Panel on Security**

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 6 January 2009**

**Automated Passenger Clearance System**

**Purpose**

      This paper provides background information on the Automated Passenger Clearance System (e-Channels) of the Immigration Department.

**e-Channels**

2.      On 16 December 2004, the Immigration Department (ImmD) introduced e-Channels for members of the public. Since then, all passenger control points have been installed with e-Channels, including the control points at the Hong Kong International Airport, Hung Hom, Lo Wu, Lok Ma Chau, Lok Ma Chau Spur Line, Man Kam To, Sha Tau Kok, Shenzhen Bay, China Ferry Terminal, Macau Ferry Terminal and Tuen Mun Ferry Terminal. Currently, Hong Kong permanent residents (except those under the age of 11) or Hong Kong residents holding Document of Identity for Visa Purposes can use their smart identity cards to perform self-service immigration clearance.

3.      The e-Channels system deploys fingerprint verification technology for authentication of a person's identity. According to the Administration's annual report on the implementation of government computer systems to the Finance Committee in January 2008, a total of 234 e-Channels have been installed at various immigration control points as at 31 March 2007. The installation of e-Channels has significantly increased the overall passenger throughput at control points because every two traditional counters could be converted into three e-Channels and manpower could be redeployed to serve visitors and other identity card holders who used traditional counters.

**Express e-Channels**

4.     During the visit of members of the Panel on Security to ImmD on 20 November 2008, members were informed that it took an average of around 12 seconds for passengers who were familiar with e-Channels to complete the clearance process, while the automated passenger clearance system on the Shenzhen side took a shorter time to clear one ordinary passenger.   The difference in clearance time had resulted in longer queues at control points on the Hong Kong side, especially at such times when the passenger volume was high.   To enable passengers using self-service clearance to enjoy a faster and more efficient service, ImmD planned to launch a pilot scheme on Express e-Channels in early 2009.   According to the Administration, Express e-Channels could shorten the time for immigration clearance to about seven seconds for each ordinary passenger.

5.     Passengers who intend to use Express e-Channels would have to register once at the control point, where they would be asked to give consent for ImmD to collect information on their smart identity cards and store such information in the computer system at the control point for future immigration clearance with Express e-Channels. Some members including Hon James TO and Hon Emily LAU have expressed concern about the possible impact of such collection of information on the privacy of passengers.

**Related information**

6.     Questions relating to e-Channels were raised by Members at the following Council meetings -

     (a)    at the Council meeting on 16 March 2005, Hon SIN Chung-kai raised a question on the automated passenger clearance system;

     (b)    at the Council meeting on 14 December 2005, Hon Patrick LAU raised a question about smart ID card readers and verification of fingerprints of card holders; and

     (c)    at the Council meeting on 27 June 2007, Hon SIN Chung-kai raised a question on updated information systems strategy of Immigration Department.

**Relevant papers**

7.     Members may wish to refer to the following minutes and papers for further details -

(a)    minutes of the meeting of the Panel on Security on 7 December 2004 (LC Paper No. CB(2)666/04-05);

(b)    Administration's paper entitled "Implementation of Phase II of the Updated Information Systems Strategy for the Immigration Department - the Automated Passenger Clearance System and the Automated Vehicle Clearance System" (LC Paper No. CB(2)286/04-05(01));

(c)    supplementary information provided by the Administration on the Automated Passenger Clearance (APC) System and the Automated Vehicle Clearance (AVC) System (LC Paper No. CB(2)893/04-05(01)); and

(d)    Administration's annual report on the implementation of government computer systems (FCRI(2007-08)16).

8.    The above minutes and papers are also available on the website of the Legislative Council (http://www.legco.gov.hk).

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