

For information on
6 January 2015

Panel on Security of the Legislative Council

Latest Situation of the Operation of Control Points

Introduction

This paper briefs Members on the latest immigration clearance situation at control points, and the measures taken by the Immigration Department (ImmD) to facilitate clearance for passengers.

Clearance situation

2. In the first eleven months of 2014, the total number of passengers entering Hong Kong reached 132 million, representing a 4.6% increase comparing to that of the same period in 2013. The total number of trips made by visitors to Hong Kong reached 55 million, or on average 165 200 trips per day, representing an increase of 12.5% over the same period in 2013. Among them, 77.2% were cross-boundary trips made by Mainland visitors, amounting to an average of 127 600 trips every day, which represents an increase of 16.4% over the same period in 2013. Statistics on arriving passengers in the past three years are at Annex.

3. Meanwhile, vehicular flow in the first eleven months of 2014 has decreased slightly by 2.1% as compared with the same period in 2013. On average 20 800 vehicles arrive each day, with private vehicles comprising over 43%.

Improvement Measures

4. With the continued growth in passenger arrivals, the handling

capacity of various control points is one of the important factors in ensuring that efficient immigration clearance can be sustained. The ImmD has implemented various measures to enhance service quality. Details are set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

Improvement works

5. Corresponding to the reconstruction of the Shenzhen Wenjindu Port Passenger Clearance Area, most of the passenger clearance services at the Man Kam To Control Point had been suspended since February 2010 for improvement works at the passenger terminal. Clearance services have resumed into full service since August 2013 upon completion of the works, including an increase in the number of e-Channels from the original nine to 16, and an increase in the number of passenger coach bays (including cross-boundary school coaches) from the original 15 to 36. For the first eleven months of 2014, while the vehicle throughput (arrival and departure) was almost at the same level as in 2009 before the works, the number of passengers travelling through this control point (arrival and departure) reached 3.3 million, representing an increase of 66% over the same period in 2009, before the improvement works.

6. Improvement works for the passenger terminal of Lok Ma Chau Control Point commenced in November 2011 by phases. With the completion of Phase one works in April 2013, a new arrival annexure with 17 e-Channels and 12 newly refurbished counters in the arrival hall had been put into operation. Phase two works will be completed in early 2015 and six new multi-purpose e-Channels in the new departure annexure have been put into operation in late December 2014. With the completion of the improvement works, the total number of e-Channels in the control point will be increased from 20 to 33. In addition, the construction of two additional kiosks for private cars is scheduled to be completed in mid 2015.

Automated immigration clearance

7. To further enhance immigration handling capacity and efficiency, the ImmD has effectively utilised information technology and extended the e-Channel service to accommodate more passengers since its roll-out in December 2004. A continuous increase in the number of visitors holding

electronic travel documents (e-TD) is expected, with the percentage of visitors holding e-TDs among overall visitor arrivals exceeding 60% by 2016 and 90% in 2020. This expected increase is partly due to the introduction of a new electronic Exit-Entry Permit for Travelling to and from Hong Kong (e-EEP) by the Mainland authorities. We briefed this Panel on the clearance procedure for e-EEP holders in December 2013. After completion of the trial in Guangdong Province in May 2014, the Mainland authorities have begun to issue e-EEP nation-wide since September 2014, and all existing holders of booklet EEP are eligible to apply for the new e-EEP in the future. Eligible e-EEP holders may use e-Channels for immigration clearance after a one-time clearance at traditional counters. As at end November 2014, around 5.4 million movements involving about 1.6 million e-EEP holders had been recorded since the introduction of e-EEP on 20 May 2014.

8. Holders of e-EEP aside, visitors from other regions may also use e-Channels. Since 2008, the e-Channel service has been extended by phases to frequent visitors from visa-free countries and those who hold valid multiple visit visas aged 18 or above who hold HKSAR Travel Pass, APEC Business Travel Card, Hong Kong International Airport Frequent Visitor Card or Frequent Flyer Programme membership card issued by airlines which have joined the scheme as well as frequent visitors from visa-free countries who have visited Hong Kong for no fewer than 3 times in the past 12 months (via the Hong Kong International Airport). As at end November 2014, over 187,000 visitors have enrolled for the e-Channel service under the scheme and around 4.7 million movements were made.

9. Furthermore, the ImmD has entered into arrangements for reciprocal use of automated clearance services with Korea (since December 2013), Germany (a pilot scheme was introduced in September 2014, with full implementation in November 2014), Singapore (since September 2014) and Australia (details to be announced). The ImmD will continue to liaise with countries and regions with close relationship with Hong Kong on tourism and economic development to implement reciprocal use of automated immigration clearance service for visitors. We believe that this will allow greater travel convenience for people in Hong Kong and our partnering economies, which in turn will enhance the economic, social and cultural ties between the places.

10. As at end December 2014, a total of 431 e-Channels have been installed at all control points including 123 multi-purpose e-Channels which can be flexibly deployed for use by eligible Hong Kong residents or enrolled visitors. In view of the expected increase in demand for automated clearance services, the ImmD will launch a new immigration control system (ICONS) in 2016 to support future operational needs and enhance efficiency at control points. Funding was approved by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council in February 2013 for this project. Under the ICONS, the ImmD will upgrade all existing resident e-Channels to multi-purpose ones and install over 150 new multi-purpose e-Channels to enhance clearance efficiency. These e-Channels are scheduled to be put into operation by phases starting from early 2016.

Other measures

11. Apart from hardware improvements, to provide more efficient and simplified immigration clearance at control points, the ImmD has enhanced the workflow for immigration clearance. One example is the non-stamping immigration clearance service for visitors and Hong Kong non-permanent residents which was introduced in March 2013 and December 2013 respectively. Under the new arrangement, stamping on travel documents during arrival clearance is replaced by the issue of a landing slip bearing the conditions and limit of stay of the holder. Upon departure, no landing slip or stamping would be given. The new initiative helps shorten the clearance processing time.

12. In anticipation of surges in passenger traffic during peak festive periods, the ImmD would step up publicity efforts to remind all cross-boundary passengers to plan in advance and avoid making their trips during busy periods, and to look out for radio and TV broadcast on traffic conditions at various control points. The expected busy times at land boundary control points are also promulgated on ImmD's website. In addition, ImmD will also maintain close communication with other law enforcement agencies, the MTR Corporation and the Mainland authorities to ensure smooth passenger traffic flow. Appropriate traffic diversion plan will be in place when necessary.

13. In December 2013, the ImmD launched the Hong Kong Immigration Mobile Application for Hong Kong residents and visitors to obtain information on the estimated passenger waiting time at major land boundary control points and other information, such as office hours of all immigration offices. The estimated passenger waiting time is updated about every 15 minutes. The information aims to serve as a reference for Hong Kong residents and visitors so that they may choose a less congested land boundary control point or travel at less busy hours. As at end November 2014, around 89,900 downloads have been recorded.

14. The ImmD will continue to suitably deploy its resources and review its manpower and resource requirement in accordance with the trend in passenger flow and the implementation of improvement measures.

Advice Sought

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

**Security Bureau
December 2014**

Number of Arriving Passengers
(Daily Average and Percentage Change)

	2012	2013	January to November 2014
All passengers	366,000 (+5.4%)	380,100 (+3.9%)	395,700 (+4.6%)
Hong Kong Residents	233,200 (+0.4%)	231,300 (-0.8%)	230,500 (-0.3%)
Visitors	132,800 (+15.6%)	148,800 (+12%)	165,200 (+12.5%)
Mainland Visitors	94,700 (+24%)	110,900 (+17.1%)	127,600 (+16.4%)

Note: Figures in bracket denote percentage change over the same period in the previous year.