

For information on
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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.

Latest clearance situation

2. In 2014, the total number of trips by passengers entering Hong Kong reached 145 million, representing a 4.7% increase comparing to 2013. The total number of trips made by visitors to Hong Kong reached 60.8 million (a daily average of 166 700 trips), representing an increase of 12% over 2013. Among them, 77.2% were cross-boundary trips made by Mainland visitors (a daily average of 128 700 trips), representing an increase of 16.1% over 2013. Statistics on arriving passengers in the past three years are at Annex.

3. In the first two months of 2015, the total number of trips made by visitors to Hong Kong reached 11 million (a daily average of 186 700 trips), representing an increase of 11.6% over the same period last year. Among them, 81.7% were cross-boundary trips made by Mainland visitors (a daily average of 152 500 trips), representing an increase of 16.1% over the same period last year. However, the increasing trend of number of visitors has changed in March. In March 2015, the total number of trips made by visitors to Hong Kong was 4.41 million (a daily average of 142 000 trips), representing a decrease of 8.7% over the same period last year. Among them, the total number of trips made by Mainland visitors was 3.22 million (a daily average of 104 000 trips), representing a decrease of 10% over the

same period last year.

4. As regards vehicles, on average 20 800 vehicles entered Hong Kong per day in 2014 (a decrease of 2.1% as compared with 2013), with 43% of them being private vehicles. In the first three months of 2015, on average 19 800 vehicles entered Hong Kong per day (a decrease of 0.8% as compared with the same period last year), with 46% of them being private vehicles.

Ongoing and Planned Measures

5. In order to sustain efficient immigration clearance, the ImmD continues to implement various measures to enhance service quality and optimize handling capacity of various control points.

Improvement works

6. To tie in with the reconstruction of the Shenzhen Wenjindu Port Passenger Clearance Area, the passenger clearance services at the Man Kam To Control Point (MKTCP) had been mostly suspended since February 2010 to give way to improvement works at the passenger terminal. Clearance services have fully resumed since August 2013 upon completion of the works, after which the number of e-Channels has increased from the original 9 to 16, and the number of passenger coach bays (including cross-boundary school coaches) from the original 15 to 36. In 2014, the number of vehicles (arrival and departure) going through the MKTCP has returned to a level similar to that of 2009 before commencement of the works, whereas the number of passengers (arrival and departure) using this control point reached 3.7 million, representing an increase of 69% over 2009 before commencement of the works.

7. Improvement works at the Lok Ma Chau Control Point (LMCCP) commenced by phase since November 2011. With the completion of phase one of the works in April 2013, 17 e-Channels in a new arrival annexure have been put into operation. Phase two of the works was completed in the first quarter of 2015, with 16 e-Channels in a new departure annexure now in operation. Following completion of the improvement works, the total number of e-Channels in the LMCCP has increased from 20 to 33. In

addition, the construction of two additional kiosks for private cars is scheduled to be completed in the third quarter of 2015.

Automated immigration clearance

8. To further enhance immigration handling capacity and efficiency, the ImmD has made proactive use of information technology and extended the e-Channel service to accommodate more passengers since its implementation 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 exceeding 60% of all visitor arrivals by 2016, increasing to 90% by 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 February 2015, around 12.9 million movements involving about 3.5 million e-EEP holders had been recorded since the introduction of e-EEP on 20 May 2014.

9. Holders of e-EEP aside, visitors from other regions may also use e-Channels. Since 2008, the e-Channel service has been extended by phase 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 February 2015, over 191,000 visitors have enrolled for the e-Channel service under the scheme and around 5.2 million movements were made.

10. 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) and Singapore (since September 2014). 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.

11. As at end February 2015, 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 phase starting from early 2016.

Other measures

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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 February 2015, around 94 600 downloads have been recorded.

15. 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

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

**Security Bureau
April 2015**

Number of Arriving Passengers
(Daily Average and Percentage Change)

	2012	2013	2014
All passengers	366,000 (+5.4%)	380,100 (+3.9%)	398,100 (+4.7%)
Hong Kong Residents	233,200 (+0.4%)	231,300 (-0.8%)	231,400 (+0.03%)
All visitors	132,800 (+15.6%)	148,800 (+12%)	166,700 (+12%)
Mainland Visitors	94,700 (+24%)	110,900 (+17.1%)	128,700 (+16.1%)

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