

Speech by CE at HK Fire Services Department 150th anniversary grand parade (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at the Hong Kong Fire Services Department 150th anniversary grand parade held at the Fire and Ambulance Services Academy today (May 9):

It is a great pleasure to be here, an honour to serve as Reviewing Officer for the Hong Kong Fire Services Department's 150th anniversary grand parade.

I was pleased to be here just over two years ago at the formal opening of the Fire and Ambulance Services Academy, another milestone in the long, proud history of the Department, which began life as the Hong Kong Fire Brigade on this very day in 1868. From a brigade of some 100 personnel to today's elite force of more than 10 000 professionals is a compelling statement of the Fire Services Department and its unwavering vision – that has always been to serve Hong Kong, to make our city, our community, a safe place in which to live and work.

In pursuit of that goal, the Department has over the years established a number of specialist teams. They work to enhance operational safety and efficiency, while promoting fire safety and ensuring quality ambulance services. Those efforts received a rousing boost with the opening of this state-of-the-art Academy, with its specialised training facilities and more than 500 residential training places. The Academy, I should add, welcomes our Mainland and overseas counterparts for fire and ambulance training. Here, they can also exchange professional views and insight on different areas, from firefighting and safety to rescue and paramedic ambulance services. Apart from enhancing professional standards, the Academy's work will help strengthen the ties between Hong Kong and other places. I encourage the Academy to continue its efforts.

The 150th anniversary of the Fire Services Department features a year-long parade of special events – for the public as well as industry professionals. That includes the three-day Fire Asia Conference, right here at the Academy. The Conference has attracted fire brigades and industry experts from all over the world. For our guests from overseas, I wish you all the best of business at the conference and a very memorable stay in Hong Kong.

Once again, let me say how grateful I am to the Hong Kong Fire Services Department, proudly serving Hong Kong now for 150 years. Thank you very much.



LCQ10: Territory-wide identity card replacement exercise

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Han-pan and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, in the Legislative Council today (May 9):

Question:

The Immigration Department (ImmD) will launch at the end of this year a

territory-wide identity card (ID card) replacement exercise for Hong Kong residents, which will involve an estimated number of 8.8 million ID cards. ImmD will adopt a number of facilitation measures to enhance public convenience, including the arrangement for its staff to visit residential care homes to provide on-site ID card replacement service directly for elderly persons and persons with disabilities. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that section 25(e) of the Registration of Persons Regulations (Cap 177 sub leg A) provides that the aged, the blind or the infirm may apply for a Certificate of Exemption (the Certificate) with the Commissioner of Registration (i.e. the Director of Immigration) either on their own or through their representatives for the purpose of seeking exemption from applying for the issue or renewal of ID cards, of the criteria for vetting and approval of the applications for the Certificates; if it has looked into whether those persons who did not apply for replacement of their ID cards during the last replacement exercise but hold the Certificates have experienced inconvenience in their daily lives; if they have, of the details; and

(2) as some New Territories residents have indicated that some remote districts, such as the rural areas and the outlying islands, have a large number of residents and inconvenient external transport, whether the Government will consider deploying staff to provide on-site ID card replacement service for the elderly persons, persons with impaired mobility and other residents in the aforesaid districts, as well as setting up ID card replacement centres or installing self-service registration and ID card collection machines in such districts?

Reply:

The Immigration Department (ImmD) is in the process of developing the Next Generation Smart Identity Card System, and intends to launch a one-off territory-wide identity card replacement exercise by the end of 2018. All smart identity card holders will be invited in phases to have their existing Hong Kong identity cards replaced in an orderly manner. ImmD plans to set up nine smart identity card replacement centres across the territory to replace smart identity cards for the public. Subject to actual progress, the exercise is expected to last until 2022.

Our reply to the questions raised by Hon Chan Han-pan is set out below.

(1) Under section 25(e) of the Registration of Persons Regulations (Cap 177A) (ROPR), the aged, the blind or the infirm who satisfy a registration officer that their personal attendance for registration of identity cards will injure their health or the health of others are not required to register or apply for the issue or renewal of an identity card. They can instead apply for a Certificate of Exemption, which is issued free of charge, from the Commissioner of Registration (i.e. the Director of Immigration).

Applicants may apply for a Certificate of Exemption by themselves or

through authorised representatives (such as a family member, relative, social worker or supervisor of elderly homes, etc) by including relevant information such as the name of the applicant, the reason for application and health condition, etc, in writing. Samples of the related application forms can be found on the website of ImmD.

The Certificate of Exemption provides the aged, the blind or the infirm with an additional choice, obviating the need for them to apply for identity cards. When the health conditions of the persons issued with Certificates of Exemption so permit, they may at any time apply for a smart identity card, free of charge, at any Registration of Persons Office of ImmD. The Certificate of Exemption arrangement has worked well for years with no report of holders experiencing inconvenience in their daily lives.

(2) To provide facilitation to needy groups such as elderly persons and persons with disabilities (PWDs), ImmD will adopt various facilitation measures in the territory-wide identity card replacement exercise, including the provision of on-site identity card replacement services for elderly persons and PWDs residing in residential care homes (RCHs) as mentioned in the question. The measure will benefit over 1 000 RCHs across Hong Kong, including those located in remote districts and rural areas in the New Territories, and those in outlying islands.

As for other elderly persons and PWDs living in the community (including remote and rural areas in the New Territories), ImmD will adopt other facilitation measures, such as allowing persons under the age of 65, when they proceed to card replacement centres for replacing their smart identity cards, to bring along persons aged 65 or above in the same trip, so that these elderly persons need not proceed to card replacement centres separately to have their identity cards replaced when their respective age-groups are called up for identity card replacement. In addition, ImmD will work with the Social Welfare Department and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in arranging special time slots for group visits organised by NGOs, during which elderly persons and PWDs will have their identity cards replaced at card replacement centres when their respective age groups are called up for identity card replacement. All card replacement centres will be equipped with barrier-free access and facilities to provide facilitation for the convenience of elderly persons and PWDs.

Sufficient self-service collection kiosks will also be made available in card replacement centres to allow applicants to collect their identity cards with ease. Meanwhile, applicants (including elderly persons and PWDs) will continue to be allowed to authorise their relatives, friends or other persons to have their identity cards collected on their behalf, saving their need to collect their identity cards in person at card replacement centres.

In addition, the existing arrangement for issuing Certificate of Exemption pursuant to regulation 25(e) of the ROPR to those who are unable to replace their identity cards in person remains unchanged.