

CS chairs meeting of interdepartmental working group on festival arrangements on preparation for Chinese New Year Golden Week of Mainland (with photos)

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, today (January 22) chaired a meeting of the interdepartmental working group on festival arrangements to holistically co-ordinate and steer the preparatory work of various government departments for welcoming visitors to Hong Kong during the Chinese New Year Golden Week of the Mainland. The Secretary for Culture, Sports and Tourism, Miss Rosanna Law; the Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Ms Mable Chan; the Under Secretary for Security, Mr Michael Cheuk, and representatives from the Home and Youth Affairs Bureau and other relevant government departments also attended.

Mr Chan said, "We estimate a notable increase in visitor arrivals during the Chinese New Year Golden Week of the Mainland. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government will make good preparation for receiving visitors, including diligently co-ordinating the ancillary arrangements of boundary control points (BCPs) and transportation, as well as maintaining close liaison with relevant organisations and the travel trade to prepare well for crowd management, information dissemination and arrangements of public transportation and BCPs, with a view to ensuring the smooth operation of various aspects in receiving visitors and offering high-quality experience to them."

Estimated visitor flow and preparatory work

According to the Immigration Department (ImmD)'s estimate, around 8.67 million passengers (including Hong Kong residents and visitors) will pass through Hong Kong's sea, land and air control points during this year's Chinese New Year Golden Week of the Mainland (i.e. from January 28 to February 4), among which 7.34 million passengers will pass through land control points.

The peak period of outbound and inbound passengers using land BCPs is expected to be January 31 (Friday, the third day of Lunar New Year) and February 2 (Sunday, the fifth day of Lunar New Year), with around 567 000 passengers and 640 000 passengers respectively. The ImmD estimates that the number of outbound passengers will be relatively higher on January 30 (Thursday, the second day of Lunar New Year) and January 31 (Friday, the third day of Lunar New Year); whilst the number of inbound passengers will be relatively higher in the afternoon of February 2 (Sunday, the fifth day of Lunar New Year). The estimated waiting time during the period will be relatively longer. Passengers are advised to plan in advance, avoid making their journeys during busy periods and keep track of radio and TV broadcasts on traffic conditions at various control points. The busy times at BCPs are

available on the website of the ImmD at www.immd.gov.hk. Furthermore, residents and passengers may also check the estimated waiting times at each land BCP at any time or place via the Immigration Mobile Application. They can then plan their trips effectively and save time queuing at control points.

In terms of Mainland inbound visitors, it is estimated that around 1.43 million passengers will visit Hong Kong via various sea, land and air control points during the eight-day Chinese New Year Golden Week of the Mainland. Compared with last year's National Day Golden Week of the Mainland and Chinese New Year Golden Week of the Mainland, the daily average visitor arrivals will increase by 3 per cent and 14 per cent respectively. According to the estimate of the Travel Industry Authority (TIA) and the trade, it is anticipated that 2 000 inbound tour groups will visit Hong Kong during the Chinese New Year Golden Week of the Mainland, representing a notable increase as compared with last year's National Day Golden Week of the Mainland. Major tourist spots have formulated special arrangements to handle the estimated increase of people flow. The Hong Kong community is expected to become more vibrant and highly patronised during the Chinese New Year Golden Week of the Mainland, bringing opportunities to various sectors.

There will be a rich array of celebratory activities across the territory during the Chinese New Year Golden Week of the Mainland. Major events include the Cathay International Chinese New Year Night Parade on January 29 (Lunar New Year's Day) and the Lunar New Year Fireworks Display on January 30 (the second day of Lunar New Year). The Hong Kong Police Force will ensure sufficient police manpower to implement corresponding crowd management measures and special traffic arrangements as necessary for all celebrations to be conducted in a safe and orderly manner. District offices will also closely monitor the flow of visitors within their respective districts and notify relevant departments having regard to the actual circumstances with a view to strengthening management of the relevant spots.

Co-ordinate control points, traffic and public transport facilities

The HKSAR Government has given due consideration to the relevant circumstances, including the schedule and arrangement of mega events during the Chinese New Year holiday this year, as well as the experience of extending the operating hours of individual BCPs during last Chinese New Year, and decided, in discussion with relevant Mainland authorities, to maintain the existing operating hours of the BCPs during this year's Chinese New Year holiday. The Lok Ma Chau/Huanggang Port and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Port will maintain a 24-hour operation as usual. The HKSAR Government appeals to visitors to plan ahead for their itineraries, and stay overnight after participating in various local celebratory activities for the Chinese New Year to fully enjoy the rich and diverse celebratory activities to be held across various districts in the city and experience Hong Kong's unique city charm.

Relevant departments have minimised leave for frontline officers to enable flexible deployment of manpower and operation of additional counters and channels, with a view to diverting passenger and vehicular flow. The

Inter-departmental Joint Command Centre set up by the Police, the ImmD, the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED), and other relevant departments will be activated from January 28 (Tuesday) to February 4 (Tuesday) to monitor the real-time situation at various control points. The Joint Command Centre will maintain close liaison with the Mainland port authorities through the established port hotlines and real-time notification mechanism, and take timely contingency actions as necessary to flexibly deploy manpower at BCPs to ensure smooth operation of the land control points.

For transport arrangements, the Transport Department (TD) will enhance transportation services connecting various BCPs, including increasing the frequency of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge shuttle bus (Gold Bus) and the Lok Ma Chau-Huanggang cross-boundary shuttle bus (Yellow Bus), and issuing additional cross-boundary coach quotas to enhance services; as well as formulating a contingency plan by establishing a dedicated passage at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Port, Lok Ma Chau/Huanggang Port and Shenzhen Bay Port, when necessary, to ensure the smooth operation of public transport services. Regarding local public transport services, the TD has approached various public transport operators proactively to enhance their capacity, and reserve vehicles and manpower to meet the travel needs of visitors. Among them, the MTR Corporation Limited will enhance train services of various railway lines during the period between January 24 (Friday) and February 4 (Tuesday) for the convenience of residents and visitors. On January 28 (Tuesday, Lunar New Year's Eve), all local railway lines will operate overnight (except for the East Rail Line between Sheung Shui Station and Lo Wu Station or Lok Ma Chau Station, Airport Express and Disneyland Resort Line). Furthermore, in the early hours from January 29 (Wednesday, Lunar New Year's Day) to January 31 (Friday, the third day of Lunar New Year), after the service hours of the East Rail Line trains to Lo Wu Station, special enhanced bus service (KMB Route No. N73) will be provided at the MTR Sheung Shui Station to carry passengers to interchange to the Yellow Bus for their journey to the Mainland via the Lok Ma Chau/Huanggang Port, which operates round-the-clock. The TD's Emergency Transport Co-ordination Centre will operate 24 hours to closely monitor the traffic conditions and public transport services of different districts including various BCPs and major stations. The TD will adopt timely measures to cope with the service demand, and will disseminate the latest traffic information through various channels.

Management of tour groups and protection of visitors

The TIA has reminded travel agents receiving Mainland inbound tour groups to stagger arrival times as far as possible, and will co-ordinate with relevant agencies such as tourist spots to adopt appropriate diversion measures to enable proper management of visitor flows and tour buses, with a view to offering a pleasant travel experience to visitors. The TIA will also conduct inspections in districts where relatively more registered shops for inbound tour groups are located, and offer assistance to visitors and tourist guides to protect inbound tour group visitors' rights. Additionally, the Police will continue to step up enforcement actions against the illegal acts of taxi drivers including overcharging and refusing hire. The C&ED will also

step up inspection of shops serving visitors so as to combat unfair trade practices.

Weather forecast

It is anticipated that Hong Kong will be mainly affected by the winter monsoon during the Chinese New Year Golden Week of the Mainland. It will be fine and dry with cold weather on January 28 (Tuesday, Lunar New Year's Eve). Temperatures will still be relatively low in the morning and at night in the following one to two days (Lunar New Year's Day and the second day of Lunar New Year). The weather will become cloudier gradually and remain cool on the second day of Lunar New Year and the following few days. The above forecast is a preliminary assessment, and the Hong Kong Observatory will update the forecast depending on the latest change in weather.

Information dissemination

To assist visitors in planning their itineraries, the interdepartmental working group will strengthen information dissemination including the latest inbound visitor arrivals, the situation at various BCPs, information on celebratory events, transport arrangements etc, to enable residents and visitors to plan their itineraries according to the latest situation.

The Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) has also launched the ultimate guide to Chinese New Year in Hong Kong, a dedicated webpage on the HKTB's website that serves as a one-stop platform for Chinese New Year celebrations. This webpage consolidates various useful information for the Chinese New Year Golden Week of the Mainland, including the operating arrangements of major tourist attractions in Hong Kong, details of various unique celebratory events, special discount and promotional activities around the Chinese New Year Golden Week, so as to facilitate residents and visitors to plan their itineraries more conveniently. The HKTB has also stepped up promotion on the Mainland to promote large-scale events with Hong Kong's characteristics and explore the unique cultural and tourism experiences in Hong Kong, with a view to boosting spending of more Mainland visitors in Hong Kong and enhancing visitors' experience.

